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ABSTRACT

Designed to educate adult students about AIDS, this curriculum manual is intended for use by students reading at the sixth- through eighth-grade reading level. A section of teachers' notes explains what topics are covered in each chapter and how each lesson is designed. Creative suggestions for reading and acting out plays in the classroom are given, and group activities to help students create their own skits, scenes, and plays are provided. This section also lists organizations that provide speakers, pamphlets, books, and videos about AIDS. An introductory survey is designed to help students assess what they already know about AIDS and what they need to know. The six chapters are as follows: Protecting Yourself from the HIV Virus; Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about AIDS; The AIDS Crisis in the U.S.; Testing for the HIV Virus; Living with AIDS; and Taking Action: Educating Our Children about AIDS. Each chapter contains three to six readings. Each reading is prefaced by a prereading activity to heighten students' interest and encourage discussion. The types of reading selections include plays written by adult literacy and General Educational Development program (GED) students, science lessons, and stories. Some are accompanied by graphs, maps, and charts. Discussion questions, writing activities, and research activities that follow the reading selection are specifically designed for adult students preparing for the GED exam. Endnotes and 11-item bibliography are appended. (YLB)

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# Playing It Safe:

## Dramas, Stories, and Lessons About AIDS

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# Playing It Safe: Dramas, Stories, and Lessons About AIDS

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# Acknowledgements

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Much appreciation is due to the Women's Program staff members who participated in the development of this manual. Alice Redman and Susan Schacter participated in the collection of plays, field testing, and editing of this manual. Special thanks to Cameron Voss and Meg Keeley who offered invaluable advice and criticism in reviewing and editing this manual. We acknowledge with gratitude Carol Goertzel, Women's Program Director, for her guidance and encouragement in the course of this project.

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# Introduction

The Women's Program chose to undertake this project for a variety of reasons. We could not ignore the grim statistics that confronted us and our students in the daily newspapers. Statistics, such as the fact that the number of AIDS cases increased sixteen times during the period between 1984 to 1988 and is predicted to increase in geometric proportions; the fact that AIDS is the leading cause of death among women aged 25-29 in New York City; and that one in 63 babies born in New York City had the HIV virus at birth. These statistics provided a frightening prospect of the future of AIDS and its threat to our society and nation.

Statistics, however, do not adequately describe the horror of AIDS in families and communities. The Women's Program also confronted the reality of AIDS in the classroom. In a class held at a community center for HIV+ people, we watched the impact of those statistics on people's daily lives and saw students struggling with the many issues of being HIV+. These HIV+ students confronted the ignorance and fear of other people about the disease, families who would not accept them because they were HIV+, and a medical system which made it difficult, at best, for poor people to get the medications which would ease their symptoms.

Despite the growing numbers of people with AIDS, many adult students had insufficient knowledge about the disease. In a survey conducted in four adult literacy classes, we found that students did not have the necessary information to protect themselves from AIDS. For example, 39% of students believed that a cook or waiter with HIV could pass the virus to customers. Over 10% of students believed that AIDS was a gay disease which affected only homosexuals. 16% of students believed that a person with the HIV virus would show symptoms within three months. Although many adult students expressed fear about AIDS, they seemed to believe that AIDS was only a problem for people of a different race, sexual orientation, part of the neighborhood. AIDS, they felt, was definitely not a problem that could touch them or their families.

This curriculum manual is designed to educate adult students about AIDS and perhaps most importantly, to dispel the notion that the virus only affects "other people." We chose drama as the medium by which to reach students for a variety of reasons. Drama provided a fresh approach for students who felt they had already heard too much about AIDS. Drama also provided an opportunity to bring some levity to the study of a frightening topic.

In a previous curriculum manual about homelessness, The Women's Program had great success using drama and found that it had many advantages in the classroom. Having students read and write their own plays captivated their attention. Students could not sit passively while acting out a play or roleplaying a situation in order to create their own play, because the drama and the issues embedded within it demanded their attention. While providing an innovative method which effectively captures students' interest, plays also provide sufficient distance so that students can act out and problem solve the difficulties of the characters while critically examining their own problems.

Drama is also an excellent vehicle for teaching reading skills to students of different skill levels. Because many of the reading selections in this manual are short, they are accessible to beginning readers. Also, the dramas included in this manual teach skills necessary for the GED and for daily life. As students discuss how to act out a certain character, they must ask questions about how the character is feeling and what their mood and personality are. In doing so, they learn about character development, tone, and inference, all of which are key to understanding literature. The questions which precede and follow each reading are designed to develop students' critical thinking and reading skills. The writing activities which accompany each reading selection encourage students to express their own ideas through a variety of writing styles, including plays, essays and letters.

Beyond its academic attributes, drama in the classroom is just plain fun. Students enjoyed the opportunity to act out a character and make that person come alive through words. Perhaps more than any other literary genre, drama illustrates that words can come alive. As students see this potential, they are encouraged to understand the meaning behind the words they read, so that interest and a desire for meaning drive the students' reading of the plays.

The teachers who participated in the field testing of this manual spoke of the many advantages of using student-created dramas as a method to teach about AIDS:

*The class really enjoyed acting out the plays and writing their own. It allowed students to show some of the talents that don't usually come out in a strictly academic setting - improvising, being funny on your feet, capturing attention with what you say. They also enjoyed the opportunity to have fun while discussing a scary and serious topic like AIDS.*

*At first the students were apprehensive about writing plays, because they had never written a dialogue before. As they began to brainstorm, they became really animated, building off each other's ideas until they had an idea for a complete script. The writing was fun, then, because they had so many ideas and it was simply a process of putting them on paper. When the students performed their skits at the GED graduation, they were thrilled by the positive response they got from the audience. They saw that you didn't have to be a professional writer to get the message across and make the audience think and respond with laughter or surprise.*

Based on the response of the students and teachers at the Women's Program, we believe that other adult education programs will find this curriculum an effective and enjoyable way to develop awareness about AIDS and to enhance literacy skills. By discussing, reading and writing about AIDS in the classroom, teachers make learning relevant to adult students. Perhaps even more importantly, they illustrate that reading and writing are integrally bound to action and that literacy skills provide the power by which students can influence societal attitudes and policy.

## Teachers' Notes

This section is designed to provide adult educators with suggestions for using this manual. The first portion, Curriculum Design, explains what topics are covered in each chapter and how each lesson is designed. The second portion, Making Plays Come to Life, provides creative and action-packed suggestions for reading and acting out plays in the classroom. The third portion, Play Writing, contains group activities to help students create their own skits, roleplay scenes, and plays. The last section, Resources for Teachers, offers a list of organizations which provide speakers, pamphlets, books, and videos about AIDS.

### Curriculum Design

This curriculum is designed for use by students reading at approximately a sixth through eighth grade reading level, however many plays are accessible to students who are less proficient readers. It is advisable to preview the readings and select those which are appropriate for the group of students with whom you are working.

The exercises which accompany the readings are specifically designed for adult students preparing for the GED exam. The discussion questions before and after each reading will help students to prepare for the main idea, inference, and critical thinking questions included in the GED tests. Graphs, maps, and charts are included throughout the manual to increase students' familiarity in gaining information from these sources which will be particularly helpful in the social studies and science GED exams. The writing activities provide students an opportunity to use writing as a way to think critically about the issues in the readings, which is necessary in the GED Writing Skills exam.

## Lesson Design

### Before You Read

Each reading is prefaced by a section titled "Before You Read" which provides a pre-reading activity to heighten students' interest and encourage discussion. The activity which precedes the plays may include discussion of a question, a quotation, or a picture. The pre-reading activity provides students with an opportunity to think about and discuss the subject they will be reading about, so that they will be more informed and active readers. These activities also help students to focus their attention on the reading and plan a reading strategy.

### Reading Selections

A variety of different types of reading selections, including plays, science lessons, and stories are included throughout this manual. The plays included in the manual are written by adult literacy and GED students. All readings have been developed to be of high-interest to adult students and to encourage discussion. The second section, Making Plays Come to Life, contains suggestions for reading and acting out the plays.

### Discussion Questions

The discussion questions are designed to encourage students to discuss and to think critically about the issues in the reading, making connections between the characters and their own lives. Many of the questions involve small group activities which encourage the active participation of students.

### Writing Activities

Most reading selections are followed by a writing activity which ask students to write a play, essay, or letter to follow up on the issues presented in the reading. These writing activities provide students with an opportunity to use their writing skills to reflect on the reading. "Play Writing", the third section of these notes offers specific suggestions to aid students in creating their own plays.

## Research Activities

Many of the reading selections lend themselves to further study. These selections are followed by research activities which ask students to do research in their own communities, schools, or libraries.

## Chapter Design

This curriculum contains an introductory survey and six chapters which are designed for student use.

The Introductory Survey is designed to help students assess what they already know about AIDS and what they need to know. The survey contains questions which ask students to state their opinions about the many issues embedded in the topic of AIDS. This aids students in thinking more deeply about the topics and determining which topics interest them most.

The first chapter, entitled Protecting Yourself from the HIV Virus, provides information about how the HIV virus can and cannot be transmitted. Moreover, it addresses the issue of how to talk to potential partners about safe sex. This chapter begins with a play which illustrates the way in which a couple discusses the tricky issue of safe sex. The play brings levity to the difficult and complicated issue of taking sexual responsibility. This play is followed by a more traditional lesson which presents the facts about AIDS transmission. The other plays in this chapter present couples wrestling with the issue of AIDS prevention in a relationship. They offer students the opportunity to "try on" different attitudes in order to ascertain which feels most comfortable.

This chapter provides the basics about HIV transmission and students may have many questions which are not answered within this chapter. Because information about AIDS and HIV is always changing, a teacher may want to supplement the readings in this chapter with a speaker from the resource list provided in the Teachers' Notes.

The second chapter, Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About AIDS..., addresses the scientific perspective of AIDS. This chapter begins with a student-written piece about how AIDS affects society which encourages students to think about the many ways AIDS has an impact on their lives. The two lessons which follow discuss how the HIV virus affects the human body. "The Healthy Immune System" explains how the immune

system works to fight off diseases in the body and uses an example of the cold virus to explain what a virus is. These concepts are crucial for students to understand what HIV is and how it affects the body. The lesson provides instruction about how HIV impacts on the immune system.

"AIDS doesn't discriminate" is the motto for chapter Three, The AIDS Crisis in the U.S. The chapter begins with a writing by four adult students who discuss the damaging impact which discriminatory attitudes about minorities have on People with AIDS (PWAs). The reading is followed by a graph illustrating how they numbers of people who are HIV+ are growing, charts showing the percentage of PWAs by race, exposure category, age, and sex. Students have an opportunity to create their own graphs from this information. The reading and writing activities which follow underline the concept that AIDS affects all people regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, or class background.

"Testing for the HIV Virus", Chapter Four, presents information designed to aid students in choosing whether or not be tested for the HIV virus. "To test or not to test", the short play which begins this chapter, is designed to raise questions about advantages and disadvantages of testing. The material which follows presents information about why people choose to be tested, what the test is like, and where people can go to be tested in the Philadelphia area. "Public Enemy #1, AIDS" was written by a group of adult students who are HIV+ and recovering addicts. The play addresses many issues including: being tested for HIV, HIV transmission through sharing needles, and the impact of the virus on families.

The fifth chapter, entitled Living With AIDS, presents a number of stories by people who are HIV+. The stories are designed to inform and sensitize students to the problems of those with HIV or AIDS. The writings also highlight how people who have contracted the HIV virus in different ways. This chapter also includes a unit which explains how HIV progresses in the human body and the symptoms of AIDS.

The last chapter, "Taking Action: Educating Our Children about AIDS" explores how people can take action against the AIDS crisis. Throughout this manual students will be confronted with many of the alarming problems that AIDS brings to society. In the face of this, one can feel overwhelmed by the immensity of the AIDS issue. This chapter presents students with an opportunity to make change in the face of the AIDS crisis. Although there are many ways in which students can take action, the method which presented itself most frequently in Women's Program classes was educating children about the virus.

This chapter examines the responsibility that parents and the school should play in educating children about the HIV virus. The plays in this chapter address the question of how to talk to children about AIDS and sex within the context of what other moral values parents want their children to learn. This chapter will challenge parents and caretakers of children to reflect on the following questions: What are the values they want their children to learn about respecting and having relationships with others? Why are conversations with children about sexual issues so difficult? What values were learned from their own parents about relationships, dating, and sex? How can parents insure that their children are learning enough about AIDS in school?

This manual presents a variety of high-interest plays and stories which will spark animated discussion about AIDS in the classroom. The writing activities which follow each reading provide an opportunity for students to create their own stories and dramas based on their own experience and opinions. These stories and dramas can be used in many ways to educate children or other adults about the AIDS crisis. In this way, students can take action in the face of this frightening disease.

## Making Plays Come to Life

Imagine your favorite play or movie read aloud by one person. Sounds pretty boring, doesn't it? Simply reading a play silently or aloud is a sure way to bore a class, because plays are written to be performed. The delight of plays is to see the expressions of the different actors and to hear the emotion in their voices as they say their lines. If you have never had students perform plays, you will be surprised at how much adult students enjoy taking different parts and acting out plays.

Acting out a character not only provides adult students with the opportunity to experience the humor, fun, and emotion of drama. It also provides a unique reading and learning experience. To accurately portray a character, the student must read carefully and thoughtfully. Deciding how a character should be acted out demands the use of many reading skills. Students must use inference to determine how a character is feeling based on the information provided in the play. They must explore the dimensions of their character and understand character development to accurately portray the part. As they discuss the issues with which their characters struggle, they learn about main idea and theme. Acting out plays and writing their own plays also teaches the important elements of drama such as setting, theme, dialogue, conflict, and plot. This section will

present a number of ideas designed to make plays come to life in the classroom.

Before Acting

Discussion and activities before acting help students to think more carefully about the situation and characters. This, in turn, allows them to act their parts more effectively and get a fuller understanding of the play. Before having students choose parts and act out the play, ask them to read the play silently to become familiar with the work and to gain understanding.

Discussion before acting is crucial to student's understanding and accurate portrayal. Questions which encourage students to explore the personality or emotions of the characters will aid in exploring the characters more deeply and aid in acting out the plays. Students can be asked to write adjectives to describe the feelings or personality of characters. Occasionally, students will disagree about a character's personality which can provoke discussion about how the dialogue provides clues to the personality and emotion of a character. Students should be encouraged to explain why they came to different conclusions about a particular character. When students disagree about a character, ask two groups of students to act out the play, portraying the character in two different ways. After both presentations, the class can discuss which reading they feel portrays the character more acccurately.

Before students act out the play, discuss the importance of reading their lines with emotion. The teacher can illustrate by reading a few lines from a play with no emotion and then reading the same lines with appropriate emotion and action.

Activities for Acting and Discussing Plays

The following activities assist students in acting out and exploring the plays' theme and characters. Many of these suggestions are adaptations of ideas developed by Adele Magner and the staff of Philadelphia Young Playwrights.

Inner Monolog - This activity helps students explore the inner thoughts and feelings of characters. To do this, assign a double for each character in a scene. When the first student says the character's lines, the double says what the character is really thinking.

Paraphrasing - When reading a play with difficult language, put everything into contemporary language. After each line, ask the student to "translate" the line into their own conversational style.

Freeze Frames - To explore a particular scene, ask a group of students to get into particular positions to portray what is happening in the scene. They cannot use words, only body position to portray the scene. Only after they have presented the freeze frame to the class can they verbally explain the meaning of their presentation.

Write a Letter - Ask students to write a letter from one character to another explaining their situation or feelings about a particular incident or scene in the play.

Introductions - Ask students to introduce themselves in character. After they give simple introductions without saying their names, the rest of the class guesses their identity. Students can also be asked to describe a character as an animal, circus performer, flower, etc. For instance, if this character were a flower, what kind of flower would he or she be and why?

## Writing Plays

After reading plays, students will enjoy creating their own plays. We have had best success with having students first write plays collaboratively before writing independently or in pairs. The following collaborative play writing activity takes approximately three hours of class time. Many of the student-written plays in this manual were created using this method.

### Writing Plays with a Large Group

Discussion - To begin the activity, ask students what plays, movies, or TV shows they especially like. From this information, ask them to make a list of what is necessary for a good play, movie, or TV show. During the discussion, bring out the following elements of drama: character, setting, dialogue, conflict, and plot.

Choose a situation - Ask the class to brainstorm all the situations in which the topic of AIDS might arise. Situations might include a mother teaching her child about AIDS, a couple talking about AIDS, or finding out that a friend is HIV+. List all of students' ideas on the blackboard. Ask students to vote on one situation in which they are most interested in writing about.

Character - Ask the class to think about two characters who would be in the play. Choose names for the characters. To help students create more interesting characters, ask them to describe the character's appearance and personality.

Setting - Ask students, "What are the possible places this situation could happen? Where could the characters have this discussion or action?" List all possibilities on the board and ask students how different settings would affect the play. To illustrate the importance of setting, ask students to imagine how a discussion might change if it took place in the middle of a freeway, in a crowded restaurant, or in a quiet room.

Writing - To begin writing the play, ask students to decide who would speak first in the situation. For example, if the play is a discussion between a mother and a daughter about the daughter's new boyfriend, who would bring up the topic? What would she say? How would the other character respond?

Once the class has agreed on the first two lines of the play, write the lines on the board. Ask each student to copy the lines on a sheet of paper. Ask each student to write only the third line of the play and, when finished, raise his or her hand. Once students have written the third line, exchange papers so that no student has his or her original paper. The students then write the next line. Each time the student writes a line, he or she receives a different piece of paper. This process continues for approximately 15 minutes, until the situation is resolved, or the group wants to stop. The activity is very fast-paced because each time a student completes a line, she receives a new paper and must read it and write another line. At the end of this activity, many different versions of the same situation are created.

Reading and Discussion - When the writing process is completed, ask students to choose some of the plays to act out for the class. The class can be divided into pairs; each pair can present one of the plays to the class. Students can discuss which plays were most interesting and why.

Writing in Small Groups, Pairs, or Individually

The activity above provides only an initial activity which will get students excited and motivated to write more plays. It can be followed by asking students to write plays on any of the topics included in this manual individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Once students are familiar with the steps for writing a play collaboratively, they can use the same steps to write their own plays. When having students write in pairs or small groups, have them improvise the scene before writing. In this activity, students make up dialogue on their feet once they have established the situation, characters, and setting. The improvisation can be taped, so that students can use it as the basis for writing.

Revising a Script

Once students have developed a script, revision is essential. The easiest way to revise is to "get the play on its feet" by asking a group of students to perform the play. Other students in the class can act as the audience and provide feedback for the playwrights. When students act out the play, they will notice dialogue that seems stilted or situations which are resolved too easily. Students can then use improvisation to revise the script.

Once the Play is Completed

Once students have completed a play, they can perform it for an audience in their child's school, a church group, or celebrations in their adult education program. Students can make a booklet or pamphlet about AIDS which includes their plays and other information about AIDS for other classes in the adult education program or for schoolchildren. These activities provide adult students the opportunity to use their literacy skills to share their knowledge and creativity while educating about AIDS.

## Resources for Teachers

The following list provides valuable resources for AIDS information for teachers who would like to supplement their lessons with guest speakers, films, videos, pamphlets or further readings about AIDS.

The Philadelphia AIDS Library
32 N. 3rd St.
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 922-5120
(A wealth of information about AIDS. The library offers speakers, videos, books, current periodicals and newspaper clippings, pamphlets at a variety of reading levels, and information about teaching children about AIDS.)

The Philadelphia AIDS Hotline
1216 Walnut St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 732-2437
(Hotline volunteers can answer questions about HIV transmission and prevention.)

BEBASHI (Blacks Educating Blacks about Sexual Health Issues)
1528 Walnut, Suite 200
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 545-8196
(BEBASHI provides speakers and pamphlets on a variety of issues related to AIDS and sexual health.)

Planned Parenthood Resource Room
1144 Locust St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 351-5590
(A walk-in reference library which offers newspaper and magazine clippings, videos, pamphlets, and books designed for use by children and adults.)

This is by no means a complete list of the resources in the Philadelphia area, but it will assist teachers in easily locating materials about AIDS. If you live outside the Philadelphia area, contact your local Planned Parenthood or health center for further resources about this topic.

## Introductory Survey

You probably already have a great deal of information about the AIDS virus from the news, TV shows, and newspaper and magazine articles. The survey on the next page will help you to see what you already know and what more you need to know about the virus. After filling out the survey, check your answers on the following page.

## AIDS SURVEY

Check whether the following statements are true or false.

| | TRUE | FALSE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. You can get AIDS by hugging someone who has AIDS. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. If someone is infected with HIV (the virus which causes AIDS), she or he will have symptoms within three months. | _____ | _____ |
| 3. If someone tests negative for HIV, she or he never has to take another AIDS test. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. If someone has an AIDS test, the results will always show up on their medical record. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. AIDS is the leading cause of death among young women in New York City. | _____ | _____ |
| 6. If a pregnant woman has the AIDS virus, all her babies will have AIDS. | _____ | _____ |
| 7. You can tell if someone has the AIDS virus by looking at them. | _____ | _____ |
| 8. A cook or waiter with AIDS can pass the virus to customers. | _____ | _____ |
| 9. AIDS is a "gay disease" which only affects homosexuals. | _____ | _____ |
| 10. The number of AIDS cases in 1984 was five times the number in 1988. | _____ | _____ |
| 11. One in every 63 babies born in New York City has the AIDS virus at birth. | _____ | _____ |

**What is your opinion?**

Check whether you agree or disagree with these statements about AIDS.

| | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Schools should teach children about AIDS prevention beginning in elementary school. | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Schools should provide free condoms to encourage students to practice "safe sex." | _____ | _____ |
| 3. People who enter the U.S. from other countries should be required to take an AIDS test before they become citizens. | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Doctors should be required to take an AIDS test to determine if they can continue to practice medicine. | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Government agencies should provide free hypodermic needles to IV drug users so that they don't transmit the AIDS virus by sharing needles. | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Children and adults who have AIDS should be allowed to continue attending school. | _____ | _____ |

**What more would you like to learn about AIDS?**

Check the two topics you would most like to learn more about.

AIDS Prevention _____ Talking to children about AIDS _____

AIDS Testing _____ How AIDS affects the body _____

Stories of people with AIDS _____

Other (please specify) _____
_____

## AIDS SURVEY ANSWERS

1. **False.** Unlike diseases like chicken pox, colds, or the flu, AIDS cannot be transmitted through casual contact like sneezing, coughing, or touching. There are no reported cases of people getting AIDS through using kitchen utensils, dishes, bathrooms, or swimming pools which were used by a person with AIDS.

The AIDS virus is found in body fluids like blood, semen, and vaginal fluids. You can catch AIDS by sharing body fluids through sex and sharing needles when using IV drugs. Some people caught AIDS through a transfusion of infected blood, but the blood supply is now screened to test for HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.

2. **False.** People can have HIV for years before they begin to show symptoms of AIDS. These people look, feel and act healthy and often don't know they have the virus. However, they can pass the deadly virus on to someone else through sharing needles or unprotected sex.

3. **False.** When someone is infected with the AIDS virus, it can take up to six months before he or she develops the antibody which attempts to get rid of the virus. An AIDS test checks for the presence of the antibody in the bloodstream. This means that if someone was infected with HIV today, the test result would be negative. It would take six months until the antibody appeared in the bloodstream and the test was positive. For this reason, AIDS counselors often recommend a second AIDS test in six months.

4. **False.** There are two types of AIDS tests available: confidential and anonymous. The results of a confidential test will be known by your doctor and will become part of your medical record. When you have an anonymous test, you do not give your name. Your blood sample is tagged with a number and you are given the same number to bring with you when you return for your results. Because your name is never taken, the results cannot show up on your medical record.

5. **True.** AIDS is the leading cause of death among women aged 25-29 in New York City.

6. **False.** There is a 1 in 2 chance that a pregnant woman with the AIDS virus will pass the virus to her baby. The virus can be transmitted to the baby either during pregnancy or birth. New mothers can transmit the virus through breast-feeding.

7. **False.** Someone can have the AIDS virus for years without being sick or showing symptoms of AIDS. Even though someone looks healthy, they can have the AIDS virus and transmit it through their bodily fluids.

8. **False.** Because AIDS is not transmitted through casual contact (sneezing, coughing, touching) a waiter who is HIV+ cannot pass the virus to a customer.

9. **False.** Because the AIDS virus affected the male homosexual community most heavily at the onset of the disease, many people incorrectly think of AIDS as a "gay disease." However, both heterosexuals and homosexuals have been infected with the disease. In fact, the numbers of heterosexuals with the virus is rapidly increasing. AIDS does not discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation. Anyone who has unprotected sex or shares needles with a person who has the virus can get AIDS.

10. **False.** The number of AIDS cases increased sixteen times during this period from 5,834 to 80,996.

11. **True.**

# Chapter One
# Protecting Yourself from the HIV Virus

The following lines were written by Kirk Dobson, a man who has the HIV virus. His words give the best advice about protection against HIV:

> **This virus doesn't discriminate for those who feel that they are special and cannot catch this virus. I thought I was special and now I am infected with it. Practice safe sex and use sterile needles. Because you can't tell who has it and when you catch it that one time you're infected for life. So don't put yourself at risk.**

This chapter will give information about how the HIV virus is transmitted and how you can protect yourself from the virus. Many people know what to do to protect themselves from the virus, but have a hard time doing it because it means talking about difficult and embarrassing topics like sex and sexual responsibility. This chapter provides some fun and interesting plays written by well-known playwrights and adult students who show how different couples handle the conversation about safe sex and protection from AIDS. As you read the plays and the information about AIDS prevention, think about the ways in which you would like to use this information into your own life. You will have an opportunity to write a play to show how you (or a character like you) might talk about AIDS prevention.

**Before You Read**

Part of protecting yourself from the AIDS virus is learning to talk to people about sensitive topics. Here is a play about a man and a woman discussing the very sensitive topic of using safe sex. After reading this play silently, choose a partner and act out the play.

This play involves a man and woman talking about safe sex. Who do you think will bring up the topic? Why? Continue reading and see if you're correct.

## Sexual Decisions
### Scene I

by: Rosemary Westbrook
and Brenda D. Whiting

*Characters: Kevin*
*Sherene*

*Setting: Sherene's living room. Kevin and Sherene are sitting on the couch.*

**Kevin:** Sherene, we have been going out for about three months. You and I are ready to become lovers.

**Sherene:** Kevin, I like you a lot, too, but we should talk about this first.

**Kevin:** Talk about what?

**Sherene:** Talk about the importance of love making.

**Kevin:** Baby, let's just do it and we can talk while we're doing it.

**Sherene:** Okay, are you willing to use a condom?

**Kevin:** A condom?!?!!!

**Sherene:** If you don't want to talk about it, then are you willing to use a condom? Otherwise, forget it.

**Kevin:** Baby, what do we need a condom for? I'll pull out before I come.

**Sherene:** Pull it out? Then what?

**Kevin:** Then you won't get pregnant.

**Sherene:** But, Kevin, I can still get pregnant and what about infections? What happens if I get some type of infection?

**Kevin:** Baby, I don't have no infection. Do I look sick, Sherene?

**Sherene:** Looks can be deceiving.

**Kevin:** Look, baby, I been faithful to you for three months. What more do you want?

**Sherene:** Lovemaking's supposed to be special, Kevin.

**Kevin:** It will be, Sherene. I know just how to make you feel good. I'll give you just what you want and what you need.

**Sherene:** There's more to it than feeling good.

**Kevin:** Look, Sherene, I got needs. Do I look like I got AIDS?

**Sherene:** Yes.

**Kevin:** I look like I got AIDS!!! What are you talking about?

**Sherene:** People with AIDS look healthy just like you and me. That's why we need to use a condom or you should get tested.

**Kevin:** But, baby, I got no burning. No symptoms.

**Sherene:** Baby, with AIDS you don't have symptoms for a long time.

**Kevin:** But, honey, I'm sincere. I've been faithful.

**Sherene:** Well, you've been faithful for the past three months, but what about before that? You slept with Barbara, who slept with George, who slept with Nicole, and so on and so on and so on....

**Kevin:** Look, Sherene, I thought you were the woman for me, but you can just forget this relationship!

**Sherene:** Being that I am a liberated, independent, African-American woman of the 90's, I don't need you anyway. So you can just step off.

## Questions

1. a. Individually, or with a small group, choose three words to describe Kevin and Sherene. Explain your answer. Why did you use those words to describe the characters?
   b. Compare and discuss your answers with the other people in the class.
   c. Compare how you described Sherene with her own description of herself in the last lines of the play.

2. Imagine that you are the director of this play. What actor and actress would you choose to play the characters?

3. In this play, Sherene begins the discussion about safe sex. Why do you think she is more committed to talking about it than Kevin?

4. a. Kevin has a lot of wrong ideas about AIDS and sexual health. Look over the play and underline four inaccurate statements that he makes.
   b. Do any of these myths about AIDS and sex sound familiar to you? What other myths have your heard?

5. Often, when a person is saying one thing, they're actually thinking something else. One way to learn more about the characters in a play is to think about what they're thinking that they <u>don't</u> say. To do this, choose four people to act out this play again. Two people will read Kevin and Sherene's lines out loud. The other two people stand behind Kevin and Sherene and say the thoughts in Kevin and Sherene's heads that they don't say.

6. How do you think Sherene feels about breaking up with Kevin?

7. Do you think the relationship is really over or do you think Sherene will go back to Kevin?

8. What would you have done in Sherene's position?

**Writing Activity**

The next day Sherene's girlfriend Louise comes over and tells her that she's a fool for breaking up with Kevin. Write a play about their conversation.

**Before You Read**

On a separate sheet of paper, write two things you already know about how the HIV virus is spread. Next, write two things you would like to learn about how HIV is spread.

## Prevention and Transmission: How you Can and Can't Get the HIV Virus

AIDS is a very frightening disease. Like many other things that are scary, people want to believe that their lives and the lives of their friends and family members can't be touched by it. Unfortunately, that's just not true. There are a lot of myths about AIDS. Some people believe that only people of a certain race or sexual orientation get AIDS. Remember that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, doesn't discriminate. It's not picky about which body it enters to produce more of itself. As far as HIV is concerned, one body is just as good as another.

Because there has been such fear about AIDS, there has been a great deal of misinformation about how you can catch it. To begin, here's a list of the ways you **CANNOT** catch the virus:

Sharing a towel with someone who has AIDS
Using the same dishes, forks, spoons, or coffee mugs
Hugging a person with AIDS
Using a public water fountain
Sharing a sandwich, soda, or cigarette
Using a public bathroom
Being cried, coughed, sneezed, or drooled on
Touching a book, doorknob, paper, table, telephone, money, or anything else that has been touched by a person with AIDS
Donating blood or having blood taken for medical tests

List two more ways that you know you **CANNOT** catch the HIV virus.

1. _____

2. _____

Other viruses, like the cold and flu, are airborne, which means they can float through the air when someone sneezes or coughs. When they land on your nose or mouth, they can enter and take hold in the body, causing illness.

It's not that easy to get the virus that causes AIDS. HIV can enter the bloodstream when it's injected with other substances, or it can infect cells in the rectum and vagina directly. In both cases, it has to come into direct contact with the blood or cells.

The four most common ways that HIV passes from one person to another are:

1. Having unprotected sex with someone who is HIV+ (has the HIV virus.) The virus can be transmitted between two men, a man and a woman, or two women.

2. Sharing needles or syringes with someone who is HIV+.

3. Passing the virus from a mother to her baby through pregnancy, birth, or possibly while breast-feeding.

4. Receiving a transfusion of infected blood or blood products, or organ transplants before 1985. After 1985, all blood and organ donations were tested for the HIV virus.[1]

The best way to protect yourself from the virus is to use a condom and a spermicidal (kills sperm) foam, jelly, or sponge which contains the chemical nonoxynol-9, which provides extra protection against the AIDS virus, each time you have intercourse. You can get free condoms at your local Planned Parenthood or health center. Doctors also recommend using dental dams when having oral sex with (going down on) a woman. The dental dam is a rectangular piece of latex that goes over the genital area and provides a barrier between the mouth and vaginal fluids. Dental dams are available through a dentist or dental supply store.

Everyone wants to believe that their lover or potential lover couldn't have the virus. However, it's important to note that people who have the virus look and feel healthy and probably don't know they have it. Also, even if your relationship is monogamous (neither person is sleeping with anyone else) the person could have gotten the virus from a past lover and may not know it.

Doctors recommend that people do not use IV drugs. If they do, they should not share needles with anyone. Sharing IV drug needles is one of the most direct ways to get the virus, because a small amount of the blood of the person who just used the needle is in the needle or syringe. When the next person injects drugs, the first person's blood is injected straight into the bloodstream. Some programs give free, sterilized needles for addicts, so that they won't share needles. Others provide bleach kits for addicts to clean their "works" (needles and syringe). Bleach kills HIV, insuring that the next person who uses the needle will not be infected with the virus.

## Vocabulary Review

Write your own definition for the following words.

transfusion
Nonoxynol-9
monogamous
dental dam
syringe

## Questions

1. Review the questions you had before you read this unit. If your questions were answered, write the answers. If not, write two things you learned from the article. Share what you learned with someone else in class.

2. What are the four main ways in which someone can contract HIV?

3. How can you get the HIV virus through sharing needles?

4. Can you get AIDS from giving blood or getting a shot at the doctor's office? Explain your answer.

5. What do some of your friends and neighbors believe about how someone can catch AIDS?

6. Is it possible to get HIV by having sex with someone who is a virgin? What about if the person has never used IV drugs?

7. What is your opinion of giving free, sterilized needles to addicts? Explain your opinion.

**Research Activity**

The topic of AIDS prevention always raises a lot of questions. All of your questions were probably not answered in this short article. To learn more about this subject, invite a speaker from the AIDS resource list (found in the Teachers' Notes section). Before the speaker arrives, make a list of the questions you would like to ask him or her.

**Writing Activity**

Public service announcements have been widely used to promote education about AIDS. They appear as short "commercials" on TV, on billboards, or signs on subway cars. What public service announcements have you seen about AIDS? Which ones do you think are the most effective? Why?

Work with a group of four students. Imagine that you are a team of outreach workers trying to prevent the spread of AIDS in your community. Create a public service announcement encouraging people to protect themselves against HIV or teaching them how they <u>cannot</u> catch the virus. The announcement may be a TV or radio skit between two people or it can be a poster. Share your public service announcement with the class.

**Before You Read**

In this play which takes place on Valentine's Day, a couple discuss some very serious issues about being someone's valentine. Before you read, discuss with a partner the best or worst Valentine's Day you've ever had.

## Be My Valentine

by: Jackie Jenkins, Brenda Mason, and Glenda Gray

*Characters: Karen*
*Nate*

*Setting: Karen's kitchen. Karen is making dinner. (The doorbell rings. Karen opens the door and Nate enters.)*

**Nate:** Happy Valentine's Day, Baby.

**Karen:** Why are you so late?

**Nate:** I had to get your present. The stores were really crowded.

**Karen:** You're a whole hour late.

**Nate:** You know I had to get the best for you. (They kiss.)

**Karen:** Thank you. (She opens the present.) A pair of panties!

**Nate:** Yeah, I think you would look good in these tonight.

**Karen:** Wait a minute, Nate. Don't push me.

**Nate:** We've been together for two months!

**Karen:** Well, June stopped by and she has a job with Action AIDS and that AIDS virus has really got me scared, Nate.

**Nate:** Aw, that's a homo disease.

**Karen:** No, Honey, anybody can get it from unprotected sex.

**Nate:** What do you mean unprotected sex? You're on the pill, aren't you?

**Karen:** You just don't get it, Nate. Look, I mean we gotta use a condom or no sex.

**Nate:** Alright, Honey, I'll use a condom, but only if you let me pick one out that I like and you put it on for me.

**Karen:** No, Nate, I want to go with you to make sure we get a latex condom that has nonoxynol 9 because it's a spermicide and it kills the HIV virus.

**Nate:** Ok, Baby, sounds good to me. Can we have dinner first?

## Questions

1. What kind of wrong information does Nate have about AIDS?

2. Can the pill prevent AIDS? Why or why not?

3. Which character is more concerned about having safe sex? Why?

4. How do you think Karen feels at the beginning of this play? Why?

5. How do you think she feels when she suggests using a condom?

6. In this play, Nate quickly agrees to using safe sex. In real life, what are some of the reasons people refuse to use safe sex?

7. Do you think it's necessary for Karen and Nate to have an AIDS test? Why or why not?

## Writing Activity

Write a play which involves a couple discussing using safe sex in a relationship. Before you begin writing, choose the characters' names and determine how long they have known each other. Choose a setting or location in which the characters will have their discussion.



3 A

## Chapter Two
## Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About AIDS...

Scientists believe that in the near future everyone will know someone who has HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Some of us already do know a family member, friend, or neighbor who has the virus. Everyone hears a lot about the AIDS virus on TV, in newspapers, and from friends. There's a lot of good information and a lot of wrong information available about the AIDS virus.

This chapter will present information about AIDS and the HIV virus. It will include information about what the virus is and why people who have the virus can get sick and die. This chapter begins with an adult student's writing about how AIDS has affected our society.

**Before You Read**

In the following writing, an adult student discusses how he feels AIDS has had an impact on his life and on society in general. Before reading, consider the following question. How do you think AIDS has changed society? Make a list with your class. Keep the list to refer to again after reading this essay.

## How AIDS Affects Our Society Today

by: Tony Smith

Today having sex is not that simple. I feel that AIDS has affected our society to the point where we have to look at it as life or death. I have to ask myself, "How bad do I want to have sex with someone I don't know?" or "Should I get in a relationship without both of us being tested for HIV?"

In society today we hear of people who are infected with AIDS. Children die from blood transfusions where the blood was infected with AIDS. For me I had a friend who has died from this disease. It was very hard watching a loved one die a slow death. It was hard for the family, too. Some people with AIDS try to commit suicide.

In our society today we need to take the time to learn more about this disease, because it is killing people everyday. In Philadelphia alone, there are 2,644 cases of people with the virus. It is one disease that could change life as we know it. It also makes us think more about our own mortality.

AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) can be contracted through sex and intravenous drug use. We should all take time to learn more about this disease and, more importantly, teach our children about it.

We have come to a time in life when we have to stop and think about more than just having sex, but what it means to have sex and who it will affect. We need to think about what it means to our partner, our family, our children, and most importantly, our own lives.

## Questions

1. What does Tony mean by "Today having sex is not that simple"?

2. Tony says he has a friend who died of AIDS. Do you know anyone who has the virus? What kind of problems do people with AIDS encounter?

3. The author writes that there are 2,644 HIV cases in Philadelphia. This essay was written in 1991. How many cases are there now in Philadelphia? In your city?

4. Society has had to deal with many life-threatening diseases like cancer, sickle cell anemia, and tuberculosis. How do you think society's reaction to AIDS has been different than its reaction to other diseases? How has it been similar?

## Writing Activity

Refer back to your list of the ways in which AIDS has affected society. After reading this essay, what else would you add to the list? Organize the list into the following categories:
1. How AIDS has affected intimate relationships
2. How it has affected children and families
3. How it affects people with AIDS.
Choose one category and write about it.

**Before You Read**

What does a cold have to do with AIDS? More than you would think. AIDS affects your body's ability to get rid of ordinary diseases like colds. Through learning about colds and how the body works to get rid of them you will learn about the immune system. Understanding the immune system is important to understanding how AIDS works in the human body. So, our story about AIDS begins with the common cold.

Most people are familiar with the immune system through having had a cold or the flu at some time. How often have you or your children had a cold in the past year? What did you do to cure the cold? On separate sheet of paper, write two things <u>you already know</u> about curing a cold. Next, write two things <u>you would like to know</u>.

## The Healthy Immune System

A cold is caused by any one of 200 different viruses. A virus is a microscopic (too small to be seen with the human eye) particle made of genetic material with a protein covering. The genetic material gives directions for making more of the virus. Since a virus can't reproduce by itself, it uses a human body cell to help it reproduce. It injects itself into the cell and uses the cell to make more of itself. The cell then bursts and dies, releasing more of the virus. Because the cold or flu virus is killing off the body's cells, it makes you feel sick. You get the runny nose, scratchy throat, headache, and tired feeling that comes with a cold. Because the flu virus is different, it has different symptoms like fever and nausea.

Although everyone has a favorite method of curing a cold or flu, there is actually no way to cure these illnesses caused by a virus. Many things (like rest, fluids, hot tea, cold medicine and cough syrup) can make someone feel better when they have a cold. Basically, though, a cold just has to "run its course" until your body gets rid of it in about 7 to 10 days.

There is no way to stop an illness caused by a virus after it happens, but it is possible to stop the virus from taking hold in your body. When you were a child you probably got a lot of shots called vaccinations for diseases like measles, mumps, smallpox, or dyptheria. As an adult, you may get a vaccination against the flu. The vaccination gives you a small amount of the virus which is too small to make you really sick. Your body creates antibodies which will help to fight off the virus in the future. An antibody is a microscopic particle which is a mirror image to the virus, it

bonds on to the virus and takes it out of commission.

Antibodies are one part of your immune system which is designed to fight off the microscopic viruses or bacteria that cause a cold, flu, or other illness. Imagine an army of soldiers protecting your body against outside invaders and you will have a pretty good idea of what the immune system does, except that all the soldiers are microscopic. Each time your body is attacked by an invader like the cold virus, your immune system produces more microscopic soldiers to fight off the invasion.

The immune system is a very complex system of body cells and organs. Two important ways this system works are through lymph nodes and blood. Lymph nodes are the areas on your neck, right below your jaw, that the doctor feels when you go for a check-up. She or he is feeling to see whether they are swollen. When your body is trying to fight off an illness, your lymph nodes swell because they are producing substances to fight off the virus or bacteria.

Your blood also produces white blood cells that help in the immune system's fight against invaders. Two especially important white blood cells are T-4 and T-8 cells. T-4 cells act like a switch that turns the immune system on. It starts the chain events that mobilizes the army of the immune system to fight off against the invading virus. Once the virus is killed off, the T-8 cells switch the immune system off.

## Vocabulary Review

Write your own definition for the following words.

virus
immune system
T-4 and T-8 cells
lymph nodes
antibodies
genetic
microscopic

## Questions

1. Review the questions you had before you read this unit. If your questions were answered, write the answers. If not, write two things you learned from the article. Share what you learned with someone else in class.

2. What is a vaccine? How does it work?

3. What are other diseases for which you or your children have had vaccines? What do they have in common with a cold, mumps, and measles?

4. Why can't you cure a cold?

5. Explain how the immune system works. What part do T-4 cells play in the immune system? T-8 cells?

**Before You Read**

This lesson will explain how AIDS affects the human body and the immune system. Before you begin reading, write two things you already know about how the HIV virus affects the body. Next, write two things you would like to learn about how HIV affects the body.

## AIDS and the Immune System

AIDS is caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV for short). HIV is a virus, the same type of organism that causes a cold, but it is a different kind and has a very different result. Just like a Chihuahua and a Great Dane are both dogs, the cold virus and the HIV virus are very different. The HIV virus is made up of genetic material with a protein covering like all other viruses. Also, like other viruses, it can't reproduce by itself. It needs to use a cell to make more of itself. The cell provides a kind of factory which churns out more and more of the HIV.

HIV uses T-4 and T-8 cells, the cells which turn on and off the immune system, as the factories to reproduce itself. HIV attacks these cells and injects its genetic material into the cell. The HIV genetic material forces the cell to produce more of the virus. The cell produces thousands of new HIV viruses which infect new cells. The cell bursts to release the new crop of HIV and is killed in the process. This means that there are more and more HIV and fewer T-4 and T-8 cells.

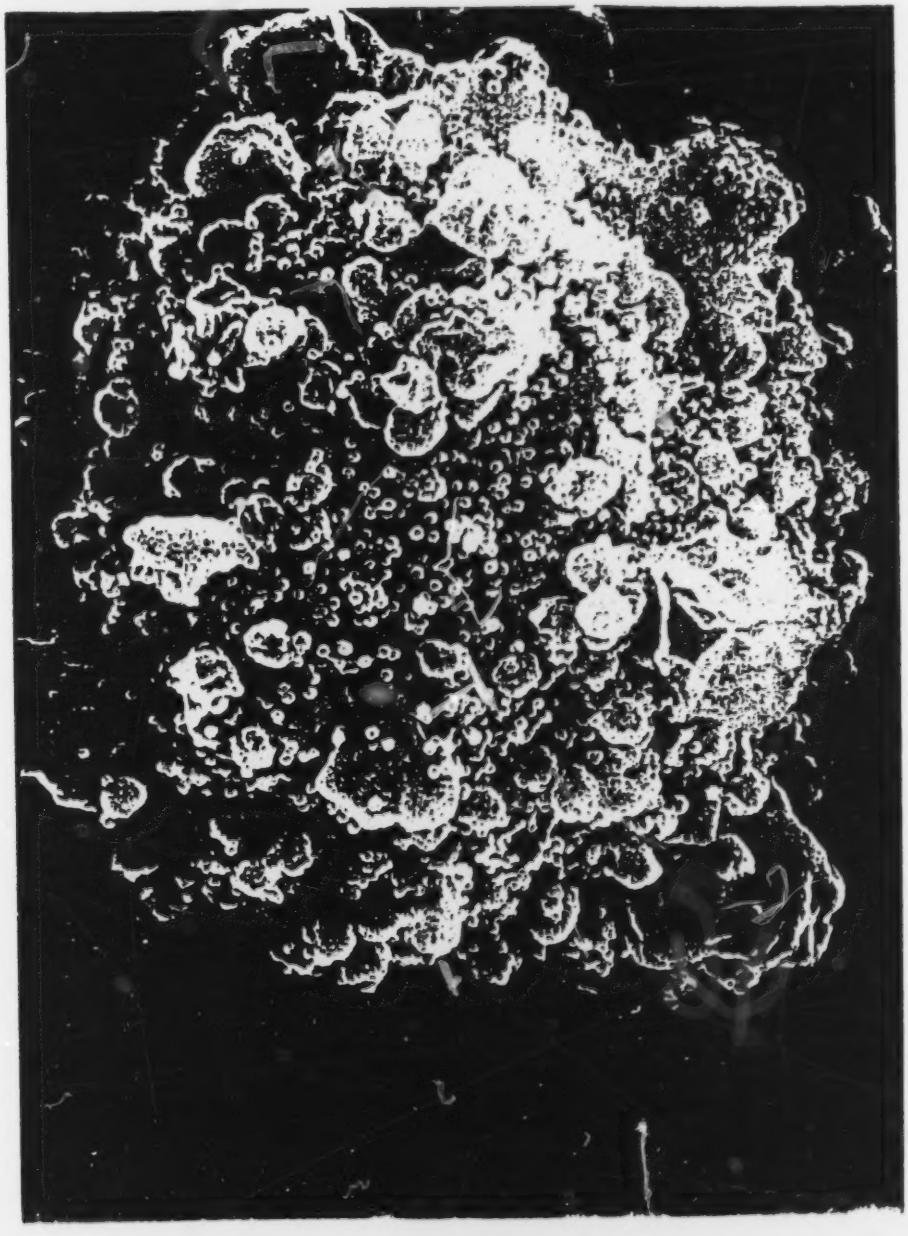
**Question**

If there are fewer T-4 and T-8 cells, what effect will this have on the body? (Remember what function that the T-4 and T-8 cells play in the immune system.)

If you responded that the body can no longer fight against disease, you're exactly right. Because the T-4 and T-8 cells are being killed off, the immune system is permanently shut off. It can't produce the armies of cells it needs to fight off ordinary illnesses like the cold, flu, pneumonia, or any of the other microscopic viruses or bacteria that your body is exposed to on a daily basis. When someone dies of AIDS, they don't actually die from the virus. Instead, they die because of the many illnesses that take over the body because the immune system cannot fight them off.

It may take years from the time someone is infected with the virus to the time they become sick with AIDS. During this time, the person with HIV looks and feels perfectly healthy and may not know she or he has the virus. However, he or she can pass the virus to someone else through unprotected sex or sharing a needle for intravenous (IV) drugs.

The picture below shows a T-4 cell infected with HIV. The virus is multiplying rapidly within the cell and is "budding" on its surface, ready to burst out of the cell, killing it and going on to infect other cells. (Magnification: 20,000x)[1]



## Vocabulary Review

Write your own definition for the following words.

| | |
|---|---|
| AIDS | HIV |
| T-4 cells | microscopic |

## Questions

1. Review the questions you had before reading this unit. If your questions were answered, write the answers. If not, write two things you learned from the article. Share what you learned with someone else in class.

2. How large is a cell? a virus?

3. How does the AIDS virus multiply? Why is this so harmful to the human body?

4. What does the HIV virus do to the body's ability to fight off disease?

5. People say that you can't die of the HIV virus. Why does a person infected with HIV become sick and die?

6. How long will someone have HIV before developing AIDS?

## Chapter Three
## The AIDS Crisis in the U.S.

There is a great deal of fear surrounding the AIDS virus. In the face of any frightening disease, people want to believe that their lives cannot be touched by such hardship. Many people think that they, their family, and loved ones are not at risk for the virus. Unfortunately, that is simply not true.

For some people, this fear has led them to believe that only people of a particular race or sexual orientation can get the virus. Sadly, this attitude has prevented some people from protecting themselves against the virus, because they don't feel that they are at risk. It has also encouraged some people's already existing stereotypes and discrimination against people who are of a different race or sexual orientation.

This chapter provides information about the extent of the HIV virus in the U.S. and shows that no group is untouched by HIV.

**Before You Read**

The following piece was written by a group of adult students. It expresses their feelings about how discriminatory attitudes about minorities affect people with the AIDS virus. Before you read, make a list of what you've heard people say about people who get AIDS. What do you think this shows about their attitudes?

## Our Feelings about this Subject

by: Diane Imes, Kimberly Jessup,
Richelle Luster, and Karen Spuriel

Many people in the general society think that minorities are drug addicts and have multiple sexual partners. Plus, since minorities are looked down upon, the general attitude is that minorities deserve to be afflicted with the AIDS virus anyway.

These attitudes have an effect on people who have AIDS. They isolate themselves. They become angry because the AIDS virus doesn't discriminate, but people do. They feel that they are being unfairly treated. They also become afraid to let people know that they are HIV+, because of the negative attitudes about the disease.

To educate people who have these discriminatory attitudes, we have to let them know that they need to be educated about AIDS, and that they could get it or anyone in their family could get it.

**Questions**

1. Refer to the list of statements that you made before reading this article about what people say about people who have AIDS. Work in pairs to come up with at least two responses to each statement.

2. a. What do these authors believe about some people's attitude toward minorities? What effect do they believe this has on people with AIDS?
   b. Do you agree with their opinions? Why or why not?

3. If you had a good friend or relative who had the HIV virus, how do you think you would react?

**Before You Read**

On a separate sheet of paper, write two things you already know about how the AIDS virus is spreading in the U.S. Next, write two things you want to know about the spread of the AIDS virus.

## AIDS Doesn't Discriminate: Statistics about the AIDS Crisis in the U.S.

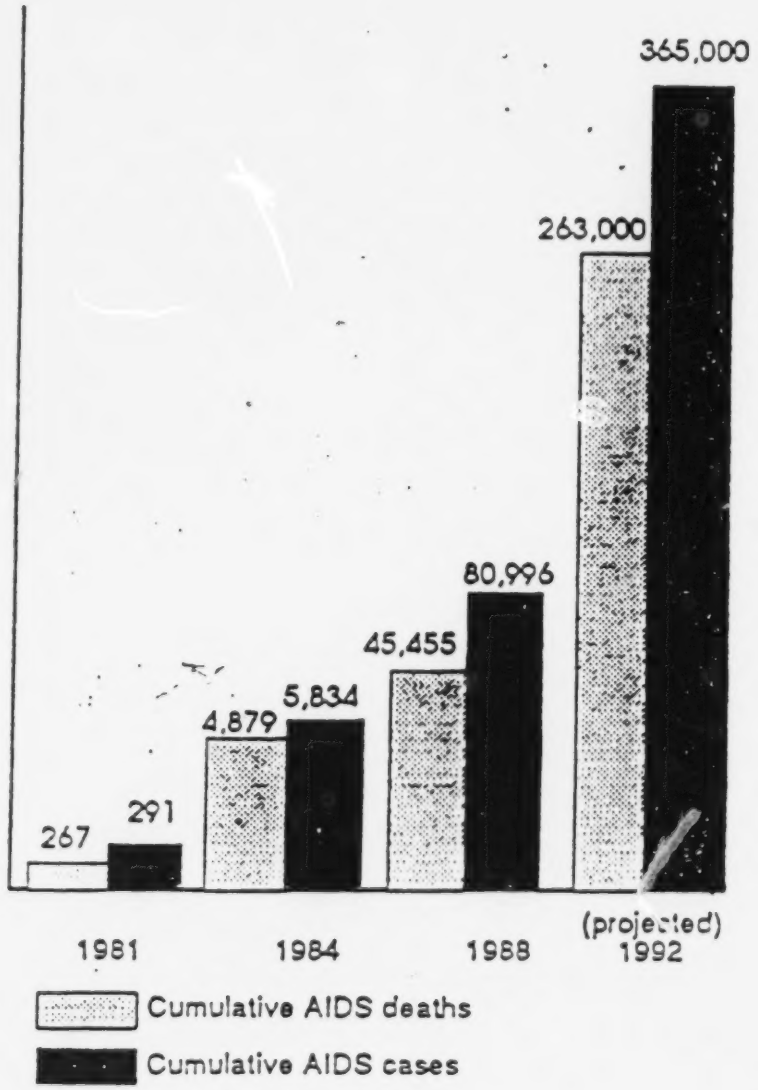
The impact of the AIDS crisis in the U.S. is staggering. The most recent statistics indicate that there are 5,831 individuals who are HIV+ in Pennsylvania alone. In the U. S. there are 213,641 documented cases of people who are HIV+. These statistics are frightening, but, they represent only the documented cases of the virus. Current studies estimate the number of actual cases to be at least one million.[1]

Moreover, as the graph on the next page indicates, more and more people become infected with the virus each year. The graph follows the progress of the disease in the U.S. from the time it was discovered in 1981.

**Question to Think About**

Why might some AIDS cases be undocumented?

## How the AIDS Epidemic is Growing




Source: Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta.

## Questions

Answer the following questions while refering to the graph on the previous page.

1. Read the title of the graph. What is the graph about? What is the main idea?

2. What do the black bars on the graph represent? the gray bars?

3. How many people were diagnosed with AIDS in 1981? in 1988? How many people are expected to have the virus in 1992?

4. How many people died of AIDS in 1981? in 1988? How many people are expected to die of AIDS in 1992?

5. From the information provided in this graph, do you think the number of AIDS cases will rise, fall, or stay the same by the year 2000? Explain your answer.

6. How many more people had the virus in 1984 than in 1981? How many more people got the virus from 1984 to 1988? Why do you think more people developed the virus from 1984 to 1988 than from 1981 to 1984?

7. How many more people died of the AIDS virus in 1984 than in 1981?

8. Imagine that you are writing a newspaper article to accompany this graph. Write a short article alerting the public to the information in this graph. Title the article.

**Who gets the virus?**

The answer to this question is that anyone can get HIV. The virus does not discriminate against people because of race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or area of the city in which they live. Some communities, however, have been harder hit by the AIDS virus. In order to evaluate which populations are now being most severely impacted by the virus, statisticians have compared information about "group 1", the first 100,000 reported HIV cases (most of which were before 1989) to "group 2", the second 100,000 cases (most of which were from 1989 to 1991). This information reveals that the incidence of AIDS is increasing among heterosexual people, women, African-Americans, and Hispanics.[2]

The following charts provide statistics about the HIV virus in the U.S. by exposure category (how the person contracted the virus), race, and age. Each chart shows percentages. A percentage means how many out of 100. For example, 90 out of every 100 people (or 90%) who have HIV are men. Ten out of every 100 people (or 10%) who have HIV are women.

**Adult AIDS cases by Exposure Category[3]**

| | |
|---|---|
| Men who have sex with men | 58% |
| Injecting drug use | 23% |
| Men who have sex with men and inject drugs | 6% |
| Hemophilia* | 1% |
| Heterosexual contact | 6% |
| Blood or organ transfusion | 2% |
| Other** | 4% |

* Hemophilia is a disease which causes problems in blood clotting. Hemophiliacs (people with this disease) receive transfusions of blood products.

** This category includes health workers who contracted HIV through their work and those whose method of exposure is unknown.

**Adult AIDS cases by Race**[4]

| | |
|---|---|
| White | 51% |
| African-American | 28% |
| Hispanic | 15% |
| Asian | 5% |
| American Indian | 1% |

**AIDS cases by Age**[5]

| | |
|---|---|
| Under 5 | 1% |
| 5-12 | 0% |
| 13-19 | 0% |
| 20-29 | 19% |
| 30-39 | 46% |
| 40-49 | 23% |
| 50-59 | 8% |
| 60+ | 3% |

## Questions

1. What percentage of people with AIDS are white? African-American?

2. What age are most people who have AIDS?

3. What percentage of people with AIDS are under the age of twelve? How many are over fifty?

4. How have most people caught the AIDS virus?

5. Were you surprised by any of the information in these charts? Why?

6. How do these chart reflect the title of this unit, "AIDS Doesn't Discriminate"?

7. If approximately 214,000 people in the U.S. have the HIV virus, approximately how many of them are white? Asian? under 29? between 30-39? How many got the virus through injecting drugs? heterosexual contact?

**Activity**

Choose one of the charts and work with a small group to create a graph of the information. What type of graph (bar, line, or circle graph) would best represent this information? Be sure to title your graph.

**Research**

These statistics were correct in March 1992 when this manual was written. Go to the AIDS Library in Philadelphia or your local library to get the most current information available about how many people are infected with the virus. The library should have statistics from the Center for Disease Control (the national organization which records statistics for all communicable diseases). Brainstorm with your class about other information you'd like to know about the virus.

The first map below indicates how many people out of 100,000 have HIV in different states in the U.S. The second map shows the names of each of the states.[6]

## Questions

1. Find the legend on the map at the top of the page. What information does it provide? What do the different colors mean?

2. Which five states have the highest rates of AIDS? Which five have the lowest?

3. How many people per 100,000 have AIDS in your state?

4. Why do you think some states have more people who are infected with HIV? Do you think it's because of the temperature, amount of rain, lifestyle, or presence of big cities?

## Activity

Choose five of the states on the map. Make a bar graph representing how many people per 100,000 have HIV in each of the states. Title the graph.

## Before You Read

The following story illustrates some of the misconceptions that people have about how AIDS is spread.[7] Before reading, think about this question. What have you heard friends or neighbors say about how someone can catch AIDS?

MONDAY
September 16, 1991

□ CLASSIFIED, *on 4-B*

By MELISSA DRIBBEN

# *The cruel secret she has to bear*

A nice Jewish grandma told me this story.

It's about a friend of hers who lives in Delaware County. The friend went out to dinner the other night and, on the way out of the restaurant, reached for a mint from the bowl near the cash register.

"What are you doing?" the woman's companion asked her, horrified. "I wouldn't eat those. You don't know who had their hands on them. Maybe someone with AIDS!"

The woman said nothing, although there was much she would have liked to. She has AIDS.

She got it from her husband years ago and has confided only in the friends and relatives she is sure she can trust. Which means she has told almost no one. Not even her in-laws.

You'll never guess how the nice Jewish grandma met this friend.

At the doctor's office. You see, the two of them are carrying the same nasty little secret.

"Promise me you won't use my name," the grandma said. "I don't want my children or my grandson to be stigmatized. Because believe me, they would be."

## *Jokes and ignorance*

People who would never suspect *she has* it make jokes. Throwaway comments. They don't understand, she said. They think you can get it from a kiss on the cheek.

You can't, of course. Nor from fondled after-dinner mints. Three years ago, the grandma didn't know that, though. She didn't know a T-cell from a tomato seed.

But then her husband came down with a cold that wouldn't go away. When the doctor said her husband had the AIDS virus, and had probably been infected from contaminated blood during bypass surgery in 1982, she thought she had stumbled into someone else's nightmare.

"We thought like everybody else that only gay people and drug users could get it," she said. "I was very ignorant."

Her doctor, who had taken care of her family for 25 years, made it clear he did not want to take care of them anymore. He didn't want AIDS patients in his practice. Then he offered them a piece of advice. Lie.

"He told us to say it was Epstein Barr disease. Because if you say you have AIDS, everyone will run from you like a leper," she said.

Her husband retired, telling coworkers he had cancer. Shortly after, she left her job.

## *Isolation and fear*

Although she knew she couldn't transmit the virus through casual contact, she couldn't shake her old, unfounded fears. She didn't want to use the restrooms in the office, lest she infect one of her colleagues.

What was worse was the isolation, she said. "The secret was such a strain."

She spent the next six months caring for her husband.

Here is their wedding portrait in a gilt frame. "We were 19. He had the most beautiful eyes. Let me show you his medals from the war." He was a POW in World War II.

Here on a table cluttered with Rosh Hashana cards, wishing her a healthy, happy New Year, are more pictures.

"He was my best friend. He was my strength. My security. He was stronger than I was. He always assured me everything was going to be all right."

He died last year. The funeral director demanded a special handling fee of $250 and balked, at first, at embalming the body. He said she might need to buy a metal-lined casket, so the ground wouldn't be contaminated. He told her she'd better not touch or kiss her husband.

She told him she damn well would.

## *Attempts at education*

The National Funeral Directors Association says it is trying to educate its members, some of whom have refused to handle AIDS bodies.

The association gives seminars, teaching morticians that it requires no more special handling for a person who has died with AIDS than those with any other infectious disease. And any casket will do.

But ignorance is a hardy beast. Irrational fears, resistant to reason.

The grandma goes to a support group in Center City.

"Doesn't anyone in [my neighborhood] have HIV?" she asked. If they do, she supposes, they're just like her. They don't dare tell anyone.

A few friends and many medical workers have treated her with great compassion. "I guess they know ... my time is limited, so they're kind to me," she said.

She wishes people could be more understanding. She wishes they would open their minds and listen to the truth.

Then nice Jewish grandmas might not have to guard such a terrible, lonely secret.

"We're living a lie," said her daughter. "I have trouble with lies."

## Questions

1. Why did the woman get so upset when her friend ate the mints?

2. What wrong information does this woman have about the way that HIV is spread?

3. How did "the grandmother" get AIDS?

4. What kind of beliefs did "the grandmother" have about people with AIDS before she contracted HIV?

5. What does this woman say is the worst part of AIDS?

6. Why do you think the author wrote this article? What is her purpose?

7. What opinion do you think the author has about people who discriminate against people who have the AIDS virus? Explain your answer.

## Writing Activity

Brainstorm with your class what you would say to this woman to educate her about how you can and cannot catch HIV. Write a letter to this woman educating her about AIDS.

## The Time for Pointing Fingers is Past

**Discussion and Writing Activity**

The following quotations were written by people with the HIV virus. Choose one quotation and discuss it with a classmate. Next, write about what this quotation means to you.

**I used to think that only homosexuals got AIDS. I thought that if you weren't gay and especially if you were a girl, then you'd pretty much be safe.**

Jackie[8]

**It was incredible to even think that Ken could have AIDS. He had been on the football team and was quite a macho man at school.... There had been rumors that he and some of his friends had been into drugs. But I didn't believe it. Ken never looked like he'd been on anything. And who'd think a school star like that would be stupid enough to get involved with needles?**

Karen[9]

**When you're on the street, you hear all this stuff about AIDS prevention, but you don't listen to it. You can't. You don't think about the future. Guarding against AIDS when you're out there all alone doesn't mean much. It's about as real as that 'Just Say No To Drugs' thing. I bet it's easy to say that from the White House, dressed in a beautiful gown and wearing all kinds of jewelry.**

Jackie[10]

**Being homosexual is a way of life for many Americans.... Many of us are dying - gay as well as straight...in staggering numbers. The time for pointing fingers is past. We must align ourselves and apply our outrage to the single goal of finding a cure to AIDS. Let's show we care about human lives. Let's find a cure.**

Otis

# Chapter Four
# Testing for the HIV Virus

As more people learn about the HIV virus, many have decided to be tested to find out whether they have the virus. You or someone you know may already have taken the HIV test. This chapter provides information about testing in order to help you choose whether to be tested.

**Before You Read**

In the short play below, two friends are discussing being tested for HIV. Why do you think some people decide to be tested for HIV? Why might someone decide not to be tested?

## To Test or Not to Test - That is the Question

By: Patricia Willis

*Characters: John*
*Steve*

*Setting: Two friends meet on the street*

**John:** Steve, you know I went and took the HIV test.

**Steve:** John, what did you go and take that test for, man?

**John:** I needed to take that test for me because this HIV is nothing to play with. I'd rather be safe than sorry.

**Steve:** Well, I don't need to take any test, because I know I don't have it.

**John:** Steve, this virus thing has gotten so big. I mean, people are dying with this thing. There are people who have it and spread it to another person It's really important to take the test and find out all you can about this.

**Steve:** Here is what I will do. Call the health office in the morning and make an appointment for me to take the test.

**John:** Hey, Steve, you are doing the right thing by taking this test. It will clear your mind of any questions you might have.

## Questions

1. Why did John decide to take the test?

2. What does John tell Steve to encourage him to take the HIV test?

3. Do you know other people who have decided to take the HIV test? Why did they decide to take it?

4. Work with a small group of students to make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of being tested. Share your list with the class.

**Before You Read**

This lesson provides information about what the HIV testing is and what it's like to be tested for HIV. Before you read it, think about what you already know about this subject. Do you know anyone who has been tested for HIV? On another sheet of paper, write two things you already know about testing for HIV. Next, write two things you would like to learn about being tested for HIV.

## HIV Testing

### Why be tested?

Each person who gets tested decides to do so for personal reasons. The decision to be tested for HIV is yours alone. It is against the law to force anyone to take an AIDS test without their knowledge and consent. If you or someone you know are considering being tested, this information may help in the decision.

Health professionals recommend testing for a variety of reasons. First, receiving a negative result on an HIV test can provide peace of mind and encourage someone to use safe sex in the future. Second, knowing HIV status will allow someone to notify potential sexual partners. Third, if the test result is positive for HIV, knowing about this early will allow that person to take care of their health and begin medication. Doctors have found that individuals who find out about HIV early and take care of their health can considerably improve their life span and quality of life.

Many health centers provide free AIDS testing. (For a partial list of testing sites in Philadelphia, refer to the end of this unit.) When choosing a testing center, consider whether it is confidential or anonymous. In a confidential testing center, you give your name, address, and medical history when you go for the test. The result of the test becomes part of your permanent medical file. In an anonymous testing center, you do not give your name or any other identifying information. When your blood is taken, a number is put on the blood sample and the same number is given to you. When you return for the result, you give your number and get your results. The clinic has no record of your name in the files. Many people choose anonymous testing centers, because they have more control over who knows about the result.

**What happens when you test for HIV?**

When you come to the clinic or health center for testing, you will first meet with a counselor. She or he will explain the testing procedure, provide information about safe sex and give you the opportunity to ask any questions. It's his or her job to provide you with information and to make sure you're ready to take the test. The counselor will stress the importance of continuing to use safe sex methods after the test, whether the result is negative (meaning you don't have the virus) or positive. If the result is negative, it's important to take precautions to make sure you don't contract the virus. If it's positive, it's important to use safe sex methods so that you don't give the virus to someone else or re-infect yourself which can make you even more sick.

Next, your counselor or another health care provider will take a small amount of blood from your arm. He or she will give you a date (probably in about two weeks) to return to the clinic. After you leave, the blood will be sent to a lab for testing. To insure accurate results, two different tests are performed on the blood sample.

When you return to the clinic for results, you will meet with a counselor who will give you the results of the test. If the result is positive, the counselor will provide referrals to support services and doctors. If the result is negative, she or he will give information on safe sex and may discuss the need to return for another test. To understand why this may be necessary, it's important to understand how the test works.

Neither of the tests for HIV can actually check for the virus in the bloodstream. The HIV test checks for the presence of the antibody to HIV. (Antibodies are microscopic particles that your body produces in an attempt to fight off HIV.) The blood will contain HIV antibodies only if HIV is present. It takes approximately six months to produce antibodies. This means that if someone contracted HIV today, he or she would test negative for HIV, because the body hadn't yet produced the antibodies. This person would need to return in six months to receive correct results. For this reason, the counselor may recommend that you return for another test in six months.

## HIV Testing Sites in Philadelphia

| | |
|---|---|
| Philadelphia Community Health Alternatives | 735-1911 |
| Congreso de Latinos, Inc. | 228-3880 |
| Hahnemann Hospital | 246-5210 |
| BEBASHI | 457-9050 |
| Kensington Hospital | 426-8100 |
| Philadelphia Dept. of Public Health | 875-5652 |

(If you don't live in Philadelphia, call your local health center or Planned Parenthood for testing centers in your area.)

### Questions

1. Review the questions you had before you read this unit. If your questions were answered, write the answers. If not, write two things you learned from the article. Share what you learned with someone else in class.

2. What is the difference between an anonymous and a confidential testing site?

3. Why might someone choose an anonymous site instead of a confidential one?

4. a. Can an employer demand that someone be tested in order to keep their job?
   b. What would you do if you applied for a job and were required to take a test for HIV?

5. Why might an AIDS counselor ask someone to return in six months for another HIV test?

**Writing Activity**

Write a short play on one of the following topics:

1. Two friends are discussing the pros and cons of getting tested for HIV.

2. A person who has taken the HIV test is returning for the results.

3. A couple is discussing whether to be tested for HIV.

**Before You Read**

This play was written by a group of recovering addicts all of whom are HIV+. They wrote it to educate other people about the virus. It addresses many issues regarding AIDS, including the decision to be tested.

## Public Enemy #1, AIDS

### Scene I

By: The GED Class of We the People Community Center

*Characters: Breeze*
*Angel*
*Annie*
*Bettie*
*Dealer*

*Setting: A hit house. There is an old couch, crates in a circle to form a table, two beat up chairs, candles and some match books. Beer cans, wine bottles, and empty crack vials are lying on the floor.*

**Breeze:** Ya got that?

**Dealer:** How many you want?

**Breeze:** Give me three bags. (Dealer hands Breeze three bags.)

(Angel enters.)

**Breeze:** Yo, Angel, what's up?

**Angel:** Not much.

(Breeze reaches for a needle on the table. Angel stops him.)

**Breeze:** Man, what are you doing?

**Angel:** Don't use those dirty needles. Didn't you hear about Roguish Rob getting AIDS?

**Breeze:** Man, that's him. I can't get it.

**Angel:** That's just what Rob thought and he got it.

**Breeze:** Hey, Rob was a born loser. Chump couldn't deal. Me, I'm a winner.

**Angel:** Hey, nobody's a winner if they get AIDS.

**Breeze:** Look, Angel, just give me the needles. I don't want to hear all that. I just want this hit.

**Angel:** If you weren't my boy and I didn't care, I wouldn't give you my clean works.

**Dealer:** Come on, man, let him use the works so he can get off.

**Angel:** Hey, my man, aren't you worried about getting Public Enemy #1, AIDS?

**Breeze:** I'm not trying to hear anything about AIDS. I came here to get high, so if I use your clean needles will you get off my case?

**Angel:** Sure, just use the clean works, Breeze. Keep yourself safe.

## Scene II

*Setting: A few months later in the same hit house.*

*Situation: Breeze has just told Betty that he took the AIDS test and found out that he had the virus.*

**Betty:** I told you about sharing your set, man. What did the doc say?

**Breeze:** He told me about some drug called AZT that I need to be on.

**Betty:** Yeah, my girlfriend is taking that. You got to be real careful these days.

**Dealer:** Man, are you gonna buy something or not? If not, get the hell out of here.

**Breeze:** Hold up! Can't you see I'm trying to talk about something important?

**Dealer:** Ain't nothing more important than this Killer I got.

**Betty:** Yo, man, all you want is money. You don't even care what happens to the brother.

**Dealer:** Hell, this ain't a counselor's office. This is a dope house. You buy and sell dope here. You wanna talk about your disease, take that trash outside.

(Annie enters.)

**Annie:** What disease?

**Dealer:** Breeze went out and caught AIDS from somewhere.

**Annie:** (To Breeze.) What! You got AIDS? Why didn't you tell me? I been sleeping with you and you got AIDS?!?

**Dealer:** (To Annie.) What? You slept with him and you had the nerve to sleep with me? You told me you don't mess with none of the guys here.

**Betty:** (To the Dealer.) Oh, no. You slept with her and you're supposed to be going with me. I knew you was messing around behind my back. What if Breeze gave it to Annie and she gave it to you. You know she doesn't use condoms. What if I have it? What am I supposed to tell my old man? Oh, my God, what about my kids?

**Dealer:** Look, I only slept with her once.

**Annie:** You're a liar.

**Betty:** Look, the important thing is were you using a condom?

**Dealer:** No, but it was only like five minutes.

**Betty:** What am I gonna do? I'd rather jump in front of a moving train than tell my old man that he has to be tested. He doesn't get high and for all I know he doesn't sleep around, either. And what about my other friend, Melvin, who works in the post office? And Tim who's in the service. I can't even contact him.

**Breeze:** My family's really gonna hate me now. My mom is sick and she doesn't need this mess. I have a little brother at home and she's trying to raise him decent. He doesn't know I shoot up. What am I gonna say to him?

**Betty:** Wait a minute. My girlfriend is seeing some kind of counselor about her HIV status. She also goes to some kind of group for people who have it. What we need to do is get tested. Then we can see what the next move is.

**Breeze:** I'm scared, man.

**Betty:** You! At least you don't have a man and three kids you're going to have to tell.

**Dealer:** Well, I'm not worried. Like I said, I only did it a couple of times.

**Betty:** Get real! This is our life we're talking about and not only ours. Other people are affected by this thing. I know I'm going to be tested.

**Dealer:** Where?

**Betty:** There's a lot of places that do testing.

**Annie:** I don't have any money or insurance. Ain't nobody gonna give me the money for this test.

**Betty:** A lot of places do testing for free. I'll call my girlfriend and see where we can get tested and get the number of her counselor.

## Questions

1. How do you feel after reading this play? Have each person in the class say one word to describe their reaction to the play. Discuss the different reactions to the play.

2. Split into three groups. Each group should choose a different character in the play. Write a character sketch for your character. (You may want to reread sections of the play before doing this.) In the sketch, include the following:

    1. three words to describe the character
    2. the issues that this character is struggling with (for example, Betty is concerned about telling her boyfriend.)
    3. how you feel about the character
    4. what this character will be doing one year later.

Share your character sketch with the class and discuss whether they think it correctly describes the character.

3. In what ways does HIV threaten to spread in this play?

4. What might prevent the characters in this play from being tested?

**Writing Activity**

Imagine that one of the characters in this play comes to you to get your advice about being tested. What would you say? Write a play about your conversation with the character.

## Chapter Five
## Living With AIDS

This chapter contains information about and stories by people who have the AIDS virus. They write about their feelings about the disease, the discrimination they faced, and their hopes for the future. We all know that AIDS can cause sickness and death, but the fear of AIDS has also caused many types of discrimination which add to the pain of those with the disease. Some people with AIDS say that this discrimination and isolation from friends and family during their sickness is the worst part of having AIDS.

**Before You Read**

This short story, written by a man who has the HIV virus, describes a day that changed his life. Before you read, think about the title. What kind of day do you think he's going to tell about? Have you ever had a day that changed you life?

## The Day

By: Phil

The day was bright, a typical summer day with a few clouds. A light breeze carried the urban smog and city smells (You know the kind that sting your eyes and burn your throat.) But somehow it didn't seem to matter. The people, the hot and muggy air, the endless city sounds all drifted into the background.

The only thing I could concentrate on was a mental picture I had in my head of this friendly, slightly plump, black woman's face with tears in her eyes. I had met this woman two weeks ago. It was a meeting that should have never really meant anything. But now I know I will never forget her as long as I live. That look in her eyes. I saw fear - a deadly serious fear. There was confusion laced with an unforgettable compassion. This poor woman seemed so out of place.

The news we shared hit her hard. I was taken by surprise. Her reaction really took my heart away. Here was this stranger with rage in her eyes. Her voice seemed to crack. Her hands were visibly shaking as she reached across the desk to take hold of mine. I thought to myself, "this person has no business being here." Fruitlessly, she tried to find some way to explain, to find some way to make sense of it all.

This stranger took my heart away. I felt sorry for her. There was sadness in her face. She struggled as hard as she could to force a smile. Slowly, calm returned to her. After all she was a professional. She knew the risk, the emotional suicide that came with sharing the result of the blood test for HIV. I asked myself why she wasn't better prepared for the possible positive reading. In the first meeting, she had seemed so upbeat.

Positive. Boy, it sounds like a good word, doesn't it? But not when you connect it to HIV testing. This poor woman - was she too sensitive for the job? Or was it me? I don't know. Could I really affect people like this? Did I seem so helpless that this news could bring her to tears?

Yes, her face I will never forget. It was just another typical summer day. The day I got the news. The day I got a memory of the stranger with tears in her eyes for me.

## Questions

1. How does Phil describe the day in the first paragraph? From the description in that paragraph, what do you think the day will be like?

2. Are you surprised by the way his day actually turns out? Why or why not?

3. How does the author describe the woman's feelings?

4. Why do you think the author concentrates on the woman's feelings rather than his own?

5. A person can live a long, healthy life after being diagnosed with HIV. In the quotation below, Kirk Dobson describes changes he made after being diagnosed with HIV. Read and discuss this quotation.

> It has been two and a half years since I was diagnosed HIV+ and my life has changed a lot. I no longer consider myself the living dead. I am now a member of We the People, an organization that is run by members who have the HIV virus. I also go out to different organizations and speak about how I am living with the virus to educate people in methods of protecting themselves from HIV. I am also celebrating two years of recovery from drugs and alcohol.

## Writing Activity

**Choose one.**

Phil writes only about the first day he got the news that he is HIV+. What do you think happens next? Write a story describing what happens to him after he gets the news that he has the virus.

Write a short play in which Phil tells his wife, a friend, or a family member that he is HIV+.

## Before You Read

In this unit, you will learn about some of the signs and symptoms which are common to people who have HIV or AIDS. On a separate sheet of paper, write two things you already know about the symptoms of AIDS. Next, write two things you would like to learn about the common symptoms associated with AIDS.

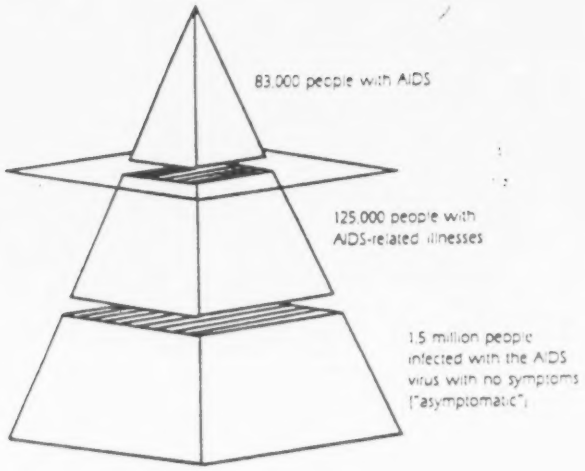
# Progression of the AIDS Virus: Signs and Symptoms

## How HIV Progresses in the Body

When someone first becomes infected with HIV, he or she has no symptoms. The way that different people react to HIV infection can vary dramatically. Some HIV+ people have had the virus over seven years and have had no symptoms. Others show symptoms in months or even weeks.

The most current theory about the progress of the HIV virus has six stages. Stage 0 indicates a negative blood test and a normal T-4 helper cell count (T-4 helper cells are the white blood cells that turn on the immune system.) In stage 1, an individual tests positive for HIV which means that there are antibodies in the blood, but they have no unusual symptoms. In stage 2, the person has swelling in the lymph nodes (which indicates infection), but no other symptoms. In stages 3 and 4, the person may feel persistent tiredness and the number of T-4 cells is slowly declining. Stages 5 and 6 indicate clinical or "full-blown" AIDS. At this stage, the individual's T-4 cell count is rapidly declining, they lose a great deal of weight, and have many "opportunistic infections." Opportunistic infections are caused by viruses and bacteria which are normally in the body, but are kept under control by the immune system. With the immune system shut off, these germs take over in the body.[1]

## The Stages of HIV Infection[2]


83,000 people with AIDS
125,000 people with AIDS-related illnesses
1.5 million people infected with the AIDS virus with no symptoms ("asymptomatic")

This illustration shows the numbers of people who are at different stages of progression of the HIV virus. As you can see, the number of people with AIDS symptoms is only the tip of the iceberg of all the people with HIV. Most people who have the virus are healthy and don't know they have it.

### Signs and Symptoms

In the final stages of HIV infection, when the immune system cannot fight off disease, the AIDS patient is vulnerable to just about every disease known to humans. There are, however, common symptoms of AIDS. The chart which follows shows some of the symptoms common to people with AIDS.

Few people with AIDS have all the possible symptoms at one time. Most have only a few of them. Some people may have symptoms that stay for a while and then go away. But even when the symptoms go away, they usually return to cause severe illness or death later on.

You've probably experienced some of these symptoms for days at a time. However, there is a big difference between the symptoms you've had and the symptoms of HIV. Symptoms of HIV drag on for weeks or even months. An infected person never fully recovers.

After getting HIV, most people begin to show symptoms of what used to be rare diseases. These are diseases which would usually strike the very old, the very young, or people who were already in poor health. Now they are commonly found in people of all ages who have AIDS. The following diseases most often kill adults with AIDS:

Kaposi's sarcoma (kap-oh-SEEZ sar-KOH-muh): a form of cancer that appears as purple blotches on the skin.

Pneumocystis carinii (new-moh-SIS-tis kuh-RIN-ee): a rare infection that usually settles in the lungs and causes pneumonia.

Lymphoma (lim-FOH-muh): a rare cancer that sometimes starts in the brain.

People with AIDS are also more likely to get mononucleosis (mono), tuberculosis (TB), syphilis, and other infections. The symptoms are usually more severe, last longer, and are more difficult to treat than with people who don't have AIDS.[3]

## How are AIDS Symptoms Different than Common Illnesses?[4]

| Signs and Symptoms of Common Illnesses | Possible Symptoms of HIV Infection |
|---|---|
| Weight loss | Weight loss of more than 10 pounds if you aren't dieting |
| Fever | An unexplained fever lasting more than a week or a very high fever (over 103 degrees) for more than five days. |
| Diarrhea | Frequent or loose stools for weeks at a time. |
| White discharge in mouth, vagina, or rectum (sometimes called a yeast infection). | Painful, thick, whitish coating in the mouth, vagina, or rectum for no apparent reason. |
| Tiredness when you're busy, when you don't get enough sleep, or when you are experiencing a lot of stress. | Tiredness and weakness that lasts for weeks even when you're getting enough rest and nothing out of the ordinary is happening. |
| Viral infections like cold, flu, mononucleosis (mono). | Many infections each year that last more than five days at a time. |
| Swollen glands | Swollen glands in more than one location without other symptoms (like a sore throat). |
| A smoker's cough or cough with a cold, flu, or allergy | A dry cough or cough that brings up fluid from lungs that lasts several weeks without explanation. |
| Skin diseases like impetigo, poison ivy, or rashes caused by an allergy. | Sores and infections that won't go away even with medical treament. |

## Vocabulary Review

Write your own definitions for the following words.

asymptomatic

opportunistic infection

progression

stages

symptoms

## Questions

1 Review the questions you had before you read this unit. If your questions were answered, write the answers. If not, write two things you learned from the article. Share what you learned with someone else in class.

2. Describe the stages of HIV infection.

3. When do people with the HIV virus begin to show symptoms of AIDS?

4. List three of the most common symptoms of AIDS from the chart on the previous page. How do they differ from symptoms of common illnesses?

5. Why do opportunistic infections take over in the human body when an individual has HIV?

**Before You Read**

Look at the picture below. How would you describe this family? Create a list of words to describe what they look like. Next, create a list of words to describe their personality.

## The Ray Family

The picture above shows Clifford and Louise Ray and their three sons: Ricky (11 years old), Robert (10 years old), and Randy (9 years old) at their home in Arcadia, Florida.[5] All three boys are hemophiliacs who got HIV through transfusions. Hemophilia is a lifetime genetic disease which causes delayed blood clotting. Hemophiliacs are sometimes called "bleeders", because they will bleed profusely after even a small cut. To combat their bleeding, hemophiliacs are given a clotting agent. One dose of the clotting agent is made from the blood of approximately one thousand donors. Since early 1985, all blood is screened for the presence of HIV. However, many hemophiliacs contracted HIV before 1985. The National Hemophilia Foundation has estimated that between 70 and 97% of the nation's 24,000 hemophiliacs are infected with HIV.[6]

The Rays learned that their youngest son, Randy, had the HIV virus in August of 1986. Later that year, they learned that their other sons, Ricky, nine, and Robert, eight, also tested positive for HIV. Meanwhile, both parents and the boys' five-year-old sister, Candy, tested negative, meaning they don't have the virus.

When they learned about their sons' illness, the Rays sought help from their minister. Instead of getting support and comfort from the minister, he told the congregation about their illness and asked them to stop coming to the church which they had attended for years.

Later that year, the Rays were told by community officials that the boys could not attend school for fear that they would give the virus to other children. With the help of a sympathetic and powerful attorney, the Rays took their case to court. They won the right to attend school for themselves and all other HIV-infected children. It is now illegal to keep a child from attending school because she or he is HIV+.

Many residents of the small town of Arcadia were very upset by the court order. During the weeks between the court ruling and the opening of school in August 1987, panic swept over the small town. The Rays received threats from anonymous callers who threatened to kill the children and burn the house down. On day, Louise Ray received a phone call saying, "Your children will die." When she called the sheriff, he disregarded the threat, saying, "All children will die eventually."

Four days after the boys started school, their house was burned down and the family moved to a nearby county. One author describes the fire in the Ray family house like this:

> The fire raced through the bedroom, consuming Mr. Monkey and the boys' other toys. As the flames licked the bedroom walls, they quickly destroyed a poster of a simple stick-figure boy holding a yellow daisy. The caption, written in the hand of a child, read, "I have AIDS. Please hug me. I can't make you sick." Then the flames engulfed the entire house.[7]

## Questions

1. How was the Ray family harassed by the residents of Arcadia?

2. Why do you think they were afraid of the Ray boys?

3. a. What is the difference between being HIV+ and having AIDS?
   b. How long can the Ray boys live before developing symptoms of AIDS?

4. How did the boys get the HIV virus?

5. a. What is hemophilia? How is it treated?
   b. Why do so many hemophiliacs have the HIV virus?

6. The mother, father, and sister of the three Ray boys were not infected with the AIDS virus even though they hugged, kissed, and ate with the boys. What does this prove about the way that AIDS is transmitted?

7. The local politicians did little to calm the hysteria which many residents felt about HIV. What could officials have done to calm the fears about AIDS in the Arcadia community?

8. What would you do if you learned that there was an HIV+ child in your child's school?

## Research Activity

Choose one.

Ryan White is another little boy who faced discrimination because he is HIV positive. Go to the library and read an article about him. Compare how his story is similar and different to the Ray family.

Go to the library and get a more recent article about the Ray family. Report to the class on what happened to them.

**Before You Read**

This story was written by Otis, a young, gay man who is HIV+. What follows is his own introduction to the story.

Being homosexual is a way of life for many Americans. For some it is a choice; for others it is their entire being. AIDS is a menacing disease which deprives humanity of the many contributions that its sufferers can give the populace. From teaching to entertainment many gay people have made their mark upon society. Yet many of us are dying - gay as well as straight...in staggering numbers. The time for pointing fingers is past. We must align ourselves and apply our outrage to the single goal of finding a cure to AIDS. Let's show we care about human lives. Let's find a cure.

In the following short story, I imagine a fictitious event in which a cure to AIDS is found.

## The Cure on Aisle Seven

By: Otis

Yesterday they found a cure for AIDS. Just two little tablets for two years will restore your health. Of course, all the pharmacies are filled beyond capacity.

Passing several pharmacies, I can see that people are deadly serious. Hands are grabbing, bodies get shoved, obscenities rip the horizon.

I've been walking for six hours, and at every Rite-Aid there's a storm of health seekers; men pushing women, fights breaking out among the young...such a rude affair.

Speaking of rudeness, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Frederic Hightower. I'm 36, 5'9", a non-smoker, recovering alcoholic, and recently diagnosed as HIV+.

Oh, I'm just as anxious as anybody else, but I believe there should be some decorum in how one handles oneself in public. Today people are literally scratching at each other like cats.

As I continue my walk I notice billboards proclaiming the new drug, BZ-12, to be a modern world treasure. Yep, just two little gel capped, blue-gray tablets and you'll feel like a new man or woman. Of course, there are two strengths. One for poor people like me...another for the rich.

Fifteen minutes have passed and I'm still no closer to getting the cure. I have enough money for two months worth.

If only I were rich. The weaker dosage has been proven to have adverse side effects.

I'm now passing a Thrift Drug Store. The circus continues. Someone is playing a guitar while a pantomimist is creating an invisible box. Among the crowd, one can hear French, Chinese, Spanish, and North Philly languages.

My feet are sore due to my shoes which now seem several inches too short. It's hot as hell and my body is soaked.

"Keep goin', Fred," I think as I walk, "hopefully the end will justify the means." So much going on in my mind. My doctor's voice, religiously stern, pronouncing me AIDS infected a year ago. My wife of three years departing without leaving a note. Speak about head traumas. At least four days out of a week, my skull feels like it's home to an active volcano. I've got it all: migraines, memory lapses.... My head is at various times a void or a congested mess.

A voice in my head keeps saying, "Keep it together, Fred. That a boy ... you can make it ... can keep the spiders of torment at bay. Just walk, Fred, walk. Don't think. Walk."

The sun goes down. I wait, watching many hopeful faces in front and in back of me. The time is 8:45 p.m. The procession moves slowly towards the pharmacy counter. People on their way out literally jump with joy. Now I can count twenty heads before me. Getting close, I begin to relax as I count five heads. The line moves. Now I'm two heads away when the guy at the counter says, "It's closing time. You'll have to come back tomorrow."

What does he mean tomorrow? All around me irate voices vent their frustrations.

"See how they treat the poor?" a man wearing overalls shouts.

"What's this tomorrow bullshit? I could be dead tomorrow!" a woman with beads in her head exclaims.

A tidal wave of emotion breaks out and bedlam takes over.

"I'm gonna get me some service today!" a youth with one dangling earring yells.

I am standing in the middle of a riot. A chant breaks out: "BZ-12 or go to hell!" Now comes the sound of sirens. Someone has started a fire. Me, I'm still standing in my spot. Police clubs swing.... There's blood and screams. "BZ-12 or go to hell!"

Standing absolutely still, I feel something snap in my head.

## Questions

1. Who is the main character of this story? How does he describe himself?

2.Why do you think the author creates two different strengths for BZ-12, the new cure for AIDS for the rich and the poor?

3. Make a list of the difficulties that poor people with AIDS face that wealthy people don't have to deal with? (What are some of the barriers that poor people have in health care in general?)

4. The author frequently uses figurative language to get his message across. What do you think he means by, "At least four days out of a week my skull feels like it's home to an active volcano."?

5. What do you think he means by the last line, "Standing absolutely still, I feel something snap in my head."?

## Writing Activity

Imagine that you have one million dollars to give to an AIDS organization. You have the choice of giving the money to Organization A which will work to find a cure, Organization B which will help sick people who already have AIDS, or Organization C which will educate people who are at risk of getting the virus. To which organization would you give the money or would you split it up among the three? Explain your answer.

## Chapter Six

# Taking Action:
# Educating Our Children about AIDS

In the previous chapters, you have learned about AIDS and the damaging physical and emotional effects it has on individuals, families and communities. Action is needed to prevent the further spread of AIDS in our communities. One of the most important actions can take place on a personal level, by educating our children and other family members about the threat of this disease. This chapter describes different ideas about educating children about this disease.

## Editorial Cartoons

Editorial cartoons can be found on the editorial page of any newspaper. Although they look much like the cartoons found on the comics page, editorial cartoons express the cartoonist's opinion about a political issue. In this activity, you will have the opportunity to explore some cartoons about the issue of AIDS.

Work with a small group of classmates (3-4). Choose one of the cartoons on the following pages and answer the following questions.

1. Examine the cartoon closely. What do you see? (Don't make any judgements yet about what the cartoon is about.)

2. What is the topic of the cartoon? What is the cartoon about?

3. What is the cartoonist's opinion about the topic?

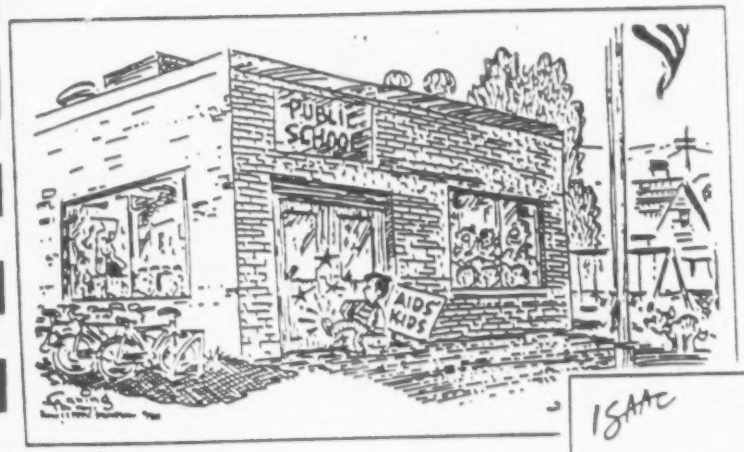
4. Imagine that you are the cartoonist. Write a short paragraph convincing someone else of your opinion.

5. Do you agree with the cartoonist's opinion? Why or why not?

6. Share your answers with the class.

7. Draw your own political cartoon expressing your opinion about AIDS or another issue that is important to you.

# Editorial Cartoons[1]



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**Before You Read**

In this article, Veronica Franklin, an adult student with two teenage children, discusses her opinion about what parents and schools should teach children about AIDS. Before you read, discuss this question. Do you think children should learn about AIDS from their parents, in school, or both? Why?

## Education and AIDS

by: Veronica Franklin

These are my true opinions on the subject of educating school-aged children and teenagers about AIDS. The educating should begin at home first. Parents or caretakers should sit down and explain to the children, "What is AIDS." AIDS is a disease which attacks your immune system. Explain to the children what an immune system is and how AIDS could affect them and eventually what the outcome is altogether. The children should be told that AIDS is a disease which will kill them, should they get it.

Children should also be told about the different ways in which they could get AIDS. Since parents or other guardians today are aware of the situation, they need to tell them about having sex, unsafe sex, IV drug users, gay people, and sometimes about blood transfusions.

When the subject of AIDS is going to be taught in the school system, I think they should let the parents know beforehand. Some children might not know about the AIDS, or they might not know about sex. A note from the teacher sent home to the parent should state, "How much does your child know about the AIDS disease? How much does your child know about sex? Would you like for the child to be told or not told about either?" I would certainly want to know what is being taught to my children in school other than the normal subjects.

I have mixed feelings about dispensing condoms to children in schools, especially children ages 11-16. You see, the way the school system is set up now, some eleven year old children are going to middle schools, which start at sixth grade and ends at ninth or twelfth grade. They are already being placed with kids that are far more advanced than they are. They are gonna be dealing with a lot more peer pressure just trying to fit in. To give children ages 11-16 condoms is kinda like saying, if you're gonna have sex, have safe sex. If the children can't afford

condoms outside of the school, the school will provide it for them. Teenagers 17-19 should have the option of getting condoms in school, buying them on their own, or just having unsafe sex. You know how teenagers are today.

## Questions

1. Summarize the author's opinions about educating children and teens about AIDS.

2. Veronica mentions a number of things she feels children should know about AIDS. Create a list, with your classmates, of what you think children should learn about sex and AIDS. Will the list differ depending on the age of the child? How?

3. The author believes parents should get a note asking whether they want their children to learn about AIDS in school. Do you agree? What if the parents say no?

4. Do you think parents or the school system have the responsibility to educate children about AIDS? Who do you think can do a more effective job?

5. The author has mixed feelings about providing condoms to children aged 11-16. She writes, "To give children ages 11-16 condoms is kinda like saying, if you're gonna have sex, have safe sex." Do you think that this is a wrong attitude for schools to take?

6. Do you think providing condoms encourages children to have sex? Why or why not?

7. What do you think the author means by, "You know how teenagers are today."? How do you think teenagers are different than when you were young? How are they the same?

## Research Activity

Call your children's teachers to find out what children of different ages learn about AIDS in school. Compare your information with your classmates. Then, discuss the following questions.

1. Does the curriculum differ depending on the school?
2. Which schools give the best education?
3. Do you think what the children are learning is enough? Why or why not? If not, what more do you think children need to learn?
4. How can you teach your child more or encourage the school system to teach more about AIDS?

## Writing Activity

Choose one.

After completing the research project above, work with a group of parents from the same school to write a letter to the school's principal. State your opinion of the AIDS curriculum and the suggestions you have.

Work with a group of parents whose children are approximately the same age as your children. Create a pamphlet to teach children about AIDS. Send a copy of the pamphlet to schools or day care facilities in your area.

**Before You Read**

The plays that follow show different ways that parents have talked to children from ages 8-18 about AIDS and safe sex. Many of the plays address the difficulty of discussing these issues with children. Before you read them, discuss the following question with a partner. Why do you think it's difficult for parents to talk to their children about issues like AIDS and sex? Make a list of all the reasons with your class.

## More than Just the Birds and the Bees

By: Alfreda Baxter, Arneither Neil,
Oliver Pope, Mary Taylor, and
Cameron Voss

*Characters: Kwame*
*Abuelita (Kwame's grandmother)*

*Situation: Kwame is about to leave for college. His grandmother decides to have a chat with him before he leaves.*

**Kwame**: Hi, Abuelita, I'm glad for a quiet moment.

**Abuelita**: Me too, honey. Come on and sit down. The food's getting cold.

**Kwame**: Yum, you sure cooked all my favorites: pernil, pollo, arroz con gandules, platanos, and ensalada. Hey, is all this because I'm going away...or what's up?

**Abuelita**: Well, before you leave for college, there are a few things I'd like to talk to you about, so you won't get into trouble out there.

**Kwame**: Chill, Grandmom. I know all about the birds and the bees.

**Abuelita**: Well, of course do, but it's much more complicated than that. I want to talk to you about safe sex.

**Kwame**: Oh, please! Not now. Let's not spoil this great meal. Anyway, I talk to the boys all the time about that.

**Abuelita**: Honey, if your friends knew so much, three of them wouldn't already have girlfriends with babies. Honey, it's important that all people who are sexually active now-a-days use some sort of protection.

**Kwame**: I already know all about that. Lewis told me he makes his girlfriend douche and he pulls out before.... Well, you know, before he....

**Abuelita**: Wait a minute. Don't trust Lewis. Let me give you some real information about AIDS. It's a serious topic, honey, and you need some serious information.

**Kwame**: Oh, alright, grandmom.

**Abuelita**: I want you to eventually meet someone nice and respectful, but respect is a two way street. Knowledge can help you to treat another with respect.

**Kwame**: Knowledge of what?

**Abuelita**: Baby, you need to know what to do to avoid diseases like AIDS. Anyone can have a disease and not know it, so be wise and use a condom. They used to call them rubbers. Here, honey, I went over to the health center and got you a whole bag of them. They give them out for free!

**Kwame**: Oh, Abuelita, I can't believe you're doing this. You're always embarassing me!

**Abuelita**: Honey, you need to learn how to treat women with respect. If you really care about a girl, you'll use protection for her life and your own. Remember, there is more to a relationship than just sex. You must be aware of her feelings and your own. Eat your dinner and during desert, I'll tell you about the church meeting I went to this afternoon.

## Questions

1. How do you think Kwame feels when his grandmother brings up the topic of safe sex? When she gives him the condoms?

2. How do you think the grandmother feels?

3. What wrong information does Kwame have about protecting himself from AIDS?

4. Kwame's grandmother teaches him about a lot more than just safe sex in this discussion. What are some of the other values she teaches him about?

5. What are some of the values you learned from your parents about love, relationships, and marriage?

6. What do you want to teach your children about how to treat the people they date?

7. Do you think teenagers' values about dating have changed since you were a teenager? If so, how?

## Writing Activity

Write about the values you learned from your parents about relationships and whether you would like to teach your children similar or different values.

# Safe Sex Rap

By: Nadine Hampton, Juliet Hunter, Kim Jackson, Valerie Rush, and Regina Turner

*Characters: Patty, a 15 year old girl*
*Carla, Patty's mother*
*Mr. and Mrs. Jones,*
*Patty's boyfriend's parents*

*Situation: Patty's been seeing her boyfriend John for about two months and they've talked about having sex. Carla, Patty's mother decides it's time to talk to Patty about practicing safe sex.*

## Scene I

*Setting: Evening. Patty and her mother are sitting at the dining room table.*

**Carla:** How are things going at school, Patty?

**Patty:** Okay.

**Carla:** How did you do on that social studies test last week?

**Patty:** I got a B.

**Carla:** Good for you! (Pause.) So, Patty, how's John?

**Patty:** Fine.

**Carla:** I've noticed that the two of you have been spending a lot of time together lately.

**Patty:** Yeah.

**Carla:** It seems like you like him a lot, huh?

**Patty:** Yeah, but, well, he.... Um. He's wanting to... ya know. He want to... have sex.

**Carla:** Oh. I hope you've given this some serious thought. With AIDS and all the other sexually transmitted diseases going around, I hope you're going to use a condom.

**Patty:** Aw, Mom, condoms are so stupid! Besides, John's not gay, Mom.

**Carla:** Patty, AIDS is not just a gay disease. People just don't walk around with a sign saying, "I have AIDS. Keep back."

**Patty:** But, Mom, all my friends have sex without rubbers. Besides, he did it with Cindy and I know she didn't make him use a condom.

**Carla:** Well, I think that John's parents and I need to have a conference over this issue because John's parents may not be informed about this issue of AIDS. I've done a lot of research about AIDS and I'd like to talk to his parents about it.

**Patty:** (Shouting.) Why are you always in my business, Mom? It's my life, isn't it? I'll talk to John myself.

**Carla:** No, I think I need to speak to John's parents.

**Patty:** Mom, you're always interfering in my life. Anyway, his parents work and you'll just be wasting their time.

**Carla:** I'm saving your life as well as John's. I'm also giving them information on AIDS in case they're not aware of what's going on here.

## Scene II

*Setting: The next day. Mr. and Mrs. Jones come to Carla's house for dinner.*

**Mrs. Jones:** Well, it's really nice that you invited Bob and me over for dinner. What was it you wanted to talk about?

**Carla:** Carla told me something yesterday and I think you should hear it, too. Are you aware that your son is being sexually active?

**Mr. Jones:** No! (Mr. and Mrs. Jones look at each other in shock.)

**Mrs. Jones:** Not Johnny! Why he's only 15!

**Carla:** Listen, are you aware of AIDS?

**Mr. Jones:** (Loudly.) What the hell are you talking about? My son is not a freak or a queer, or whatever you want to call those people.

**Mrs. Jones:** Calm down, Bob. (To Carla.) Now, will you please explain to us what you are talking about?

**Carla:** Look, I've done some research on AIDS. Do you know that AIDS is caused by the HIV virus and that someone can have the virus and pass it on to someone else without even realizing that they have it? You can get it through sex or sharing needles with someone.

**Mr. Jones:** (Under his breath.) Oh, great, now she's saying Johnny's a drug addict, too. Besides, she's a lousy cook.

**Mrs. Jones:** Hush, Bob! Carla, what's this HIV virus you're talking about? I thought you were telling us about AIDS.

**Carla:** AIDS is caused by the HIV virus. It breaks down the immune system, so your body can't protect you against disease. A person who has AIDS can't fight off infections and can die.

**Mr. Jones:** Are you saying my son has AIDS? If he's got anything, he probably got it from your daughter.

**Carla:** Look, Bob, I'm not saying anybody has AIDS, but it's important for us parents to know that our kids are having sex and that there's an AIDS epidemic out there. They need to know as much as possible to protect themselves. You know, most people who have HIV look and feel well just like our kids, but they can pass the deadly HIV on to someone else.

(Mr. and Mrs. Jones don't respond. They look shocked.)

**Carla:** That's why I've talked to Carla about using condoms with Nonoxynol 9 spermicide.

**Mrs. Jones:** Thanks for the information. We weren't aware of this ourselves. We'll talk to Johnny.

**Mr. Jones:** We'll talk to John, but you better watch that fast gal of yours, too!

## Questions

1. How do you think Patty feels when she says that John is pressuring her to have sex? What kind of clues do you get about her feelings?

2. How do you think Carla, Patty's mother, feels at that moment? How would you feel?

3. When Patty initiates the topic of sex, Carla immediately brings up the issue of using condoms. What other topics would you want to discuss with a 15 year old girl who was thinking of having sex for the first time?

4. Why doesn't Patty want to use a condom? What are other reasons teens or adults don't want to use condoms?

5. If you were Patty's mother would you have invited John's parents to discuss this issue? Explain your answer.

6. How did Mr. Jones' react to the discussion? Mrs. Jones?

7. Mr. and Mrs. Jones seem shocked that their son is sexually active. Do you know other parents like them who refuse to believe that their child is having sex?

**Writing Activity**

Have you ever dealt with a situation like this with your own children? What happened? Write a story or a play which shows what happened or what you would like to have happened in that situation.

If you haven't had a situation like this one, write a fictitious play about a parent and child talking about AIDS.

## Danger on the Playground

By: Debra Ellis

*Characters: Aaron, an 8 year old boy*
*Aaron's mother*

*Situation: Aaron and Lekeia, two 3rd graders found a hypodermic needle on the playground of the community center. Aaron returns to his mother to tell his mother about it.*

**Aaron:** Mom, Mom, guess what me and Lekeia found? We found a needle on the playground.

**Mom:** You didn't play with it, did you?

**Aaron:** Well, I wanted to, but stupid Lekeia wouldn't let me.

**Mom:** Lekeia was probably right. You should never play with things like that.

**Aaron:** Why not, Mom?

**Mom:** Because the person who used it may have left some drugs in there. Worse than that they may have AIDS or HIV.

**Aaron:** What is that?

**Mom:** HIV is a virus that gives you AIDS and AIDS is a virus that there is no cure for. It can kill a person.

**Aaron:** Well, how could I get that by playing with a needle when the person isn't even there?

**Mom:** The person doesn't have to be there. There may be blood left in the needle and you can get it in your blood.

**Aaron:** How could I have done that? I don't even have a cut.

**Mom:** You might have stuck yourself of Lekeia with it and the blood would have gotten in you when you got stuck.

**Aaron:** Okay, Mom. I understand now. I won't play with any needles like that.

**Mom:** Good boy! Now go out and play, but remember what I said, Aaron.

## Questions

1. What was the danger on the playground?

2. Do you think Aaron understands what AIDS is?

3. What more do you think he needs to know?

## Writing Activity

Aaron's friend, Lekeia, has given him further information about AIDS. Aaron returns home from school the next day and says that Lekeia told him that he can get AIDS by hugging someone. Now he's afraid that he has AIDS because his teacher hugged him last week when he got an A on his spelling test. He's confused and wants to know more about AIDS and how you really get it. Pretend you are his mother and write a play about what you would tell him.

**Before You Read**

How would <u>you</u> talk to a 15 year old girl who has a new boyfriend and is thinking of having sex? "Very carefully!" you say? Debra and Edna, the writers of the following plays address this very complicated situation in the following two plays. Read these plays and compare the different ways that they approach the topic.

## You Know How 15 Year Olds Are!

### Play #1

By: Edna Sturgis

*Characters: Jalisa, a 15 year old girl*
*Edna, Jalisa's mother*

**Jalisa:** Mom, me and Michael have talked about having sex and I don't know what to do.

**Edna:** Jalisa, I have to honestly say that you are not ready to have sex. What you are feeling is emotions that every woman experiences at your age.

**Jalisa:** But, Mom, I like Michael a whole lot and I don't want to lose him.

**Edna:** Baby, if Michael really cares for you, he will wait until you are ready, no matter how long it takes. If you do decide to have sex with him, I suggest that you get on the pill and have him use a condom. First, because you're not mentally responsible enough to raise a child and there is all types of venereal diseases and AIDS that you can get by having unprotected sex.

**Jalisa:** But, Mom, I'm afraid he's going to leave me if I don't have sex with him. All the other girls are doing it.

**Edna:** Jalisa, I want you to know that sex is something that you should share with someone who you truly love. And somehow you will know when that time comes, and that someone will truly love you also and respect you in every way.

**Jalisa:** Thank you, Mom. I am going to tell Michael that I am not ready to have sex. I like him, but not enough to do what he wants. Not this time, but maybe sometime in the future.

## Play #2

By: Debra Ellis

*Characters: Dawn, a 15 year old girl*
*Dawn's mother*

**Dawn:** Mom, I need to talk to you about something important.

**Mom:** Okay, Dawn. Let's go and sit down.

**Dawn:** I have been thinking about having sex with Gary. I really do love him.

**Mom:** Well, Dawn, if that's what you feel, all I can suggest to you is that you go on the pill and practice safe sex by using a condom.

**Dawn:** But Gary won't want to use a condom. Isn't the pill good enough?

**Mom:** No, Dawn. The pill is only to protect you from getting pregnant.

**Dawn:** Well, if I ask him to use a condom, he may not want to see me anymore.

**Mom:** Well, Dawn, if that is the case, he must not care much about you and he isn't worth staying in a relationship for. Because if he doesn't respect your feelings, he isn't going to respect you.

**Dawn:** But, Mom, I love him.

**Mom:** Well, who do you love more? Yourself or him?

**Dawn:** I love myself more. I can understand where you are coming from, Mom. Thank you. I love you.

**Mom:** I love you too, Dawn.

**Questions**

1. Who brings up the topic of sex in each of these plays?

2. Which play did you like better? Why?

3. What did you like about the way the mother in each play dealt with the situation?

4. What would you do differently from the mothers in these plays?

5. How do you know when your child is ready to talk about sex?

6. What do you think makes it difficult to talk about AIDS and sex with children? What could make it easier?

7. Make a list of how these discussions would be similiar and different if the characters were a father and his son.

**Writing Activity**

Create a play in which a father discusses safe sex with his son.

**Research Activity**

These stories and plays have demonstrated ways in which people have taken action against AIDS through educating their children. In what other ways can people become active in the fight against AIDS? Bring in newspaper articles that describe other ways to fight against the virus.

# Notes

## Chapter One

[1]Karen Hein and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo, AIDS: Trading Fears for Facts, (Mount Vernon, NY: Consumers Union, 1989), p. 22.

## Chapter Two

1 Parris M. Kidd and Wolfgang, Living with the AIDS Virus: A Strategy for Long-Term Survival, (Berkeley, CA: HK Biomedical, 1991), p. 32.

## Chapter Three

1 U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control, HIV/AIDS Surveillance: U.S. AIDS Cases Reported through February 1992, (Atlanta, Georgia: March 1992), p. 4.

2 "Pace of AIDS Diagnosis Rises: Fastest Spread in Heterosexuals" in The Philadelphia Inquirer, 17 Jan.. 1992, Section A, page 3.

3 Center for Disease Control, p. 6.

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